



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07492060 8



FIVE YEARS OF IT.

BY

ALFRED AUSTIN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

J. F. HOPE, 16, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1858.

all

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
482130
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.
R 1910 L

FIVE YEARS OF IT.

CHAPTER I.

PORTIA.—“Ah, me! how weak a thing
The heart of woman is!”

Julius Cæsar.

WHEN Edgar was some sixty miles from London, he took it into his head that what remained of the journey should be travelled on foot. His pedestrianism began about five o'clock in the morning. The larks were rising from the long, wet grass, and mounting into the far, blue distance, heralding to

heaven, with sweetest matins, the advent of the day. The mowers were briskly at work, making the most of the—to them—so precious hours, before the dew evaporates, and while the sun yet pours but mild and slanting rays. I know nothing so cheerful, so genial, so peace-bestowing, as the sound, in the first hours of the morning, of the whetting of scythes. It is the happy mean between the oppression of, utter silence, and the grating uproar of the crowded city: so exhilarating, so social, and yet so undisturbing is its unaffected music. And Edgar felt all its pleasant influence as he walked on and on, with an elastic step, and an almost lightsome heart. How exquisitely monotonous, and yet, how various in its suggestions! What a quiet, happy laugh, was there in it! What deep and half-subdued humour! What genial good-nature! It

was quite an earthly song, touching on everyday human chords—a song for every one to comprehend, and yet as beautiful as the most ideal, owned the young poet. It went so directly to the heart, and wound itself about all the simple sentiments of household relationship. It made you feel gently towards everybody and everything : childlike, happy, good, and innocent. The sound never ceased. Field after field took up the magic morning music ; oftentimes it was played on a perfect orchestra of instruments.

As our traveller journeyed on, the grass became more and more, and more and more still, generally mown ; and in some fields “ spreading ” had commenced. Rosy, round-faced, bashful lads, who would have driven Murillo to his easel, and soft-eyed, long-haired, meek little maidens, but who knew a thing or two more than their brothers,

though, came out of the cottages, laden with breakfast tied up in red handkerchiefs, and with large, nut-brown jugs, which they had to carry to the fields where their fathers were hard at work. They stopped very often, particularly at stiles, and sometimes to pluck flowers in the hedge-bottoms, and always to stare at Edgar. He talked to them; asked whither they were going, and made groups of seven or eight rich with fairly-to-be-divided sixpences; and they curtsayed, if not with grace, at least with gratitude, which, I think, does as well, if not better.

The day wore on; the sun was getting very high and very hot, and the hay—for it was grass no longer—took all the air to itself, filling it with the sweetest incense. There were no more mowers now; the fields were alive with men and women;

most of them with forks, some with long rakes, and all hard at work, and very merry over it. Again, at mid-day, children began pouring out of the cottages, such strange *fac-similes* of those whom our traveller had seen in the early morning, that it struck him he must be in the same place still, though he had certainly been walking all the time. Then he remembered that Innocence has but one expression, and that good children are like nothing else but angels *and* good children. They carried similar red handkerchiefs, tied round immense pasties, in which Edgar thought he detected gooseberries. They stopped at the same sort of stiles, plucked the same kind of wild-flowers in the same kind of hedge-bottoms, and bestowed upon him an exactly similar stare of admiration. So he thought he had better manifest similar munificence; and, strange

to say, they manifested a similar poverty of grace and wealth of gratitude.

He walked on, the afternoon striding on likewise. It was towards four o'clock—the hottest part of the day. He felt jaded and foot-sore. He was in the fields at present: he avoided the roads when he possibly could. He was coming to an unusually broad meadow, standing in front of a long stuccoed house, which had not been built yesterday. Four or five young children, with their blue sashes and hatstrings floating about them, were chasing and pelting each other with uproarious hilarity; and every now and then running up to, and teasing with manifold questions, a young lady, who was sitting, book in hand, against one of the piles of hay which stood by the narrow footpath, and was ready for “leading.” She was dressed in that most beautiful, because simplest, of all

costumes, a plain white muslin dress, with a blue sash like that of the children. As Edgar was about to pass her, he lifted his cap, and said—

“Can you tell me how far I am from Hilstone?”

“Nearly five miles—at least by the fields.”

“So much!” he said. “They told me it was but three. Thank you!” and again he raised his cap and was going.

“Pardon me,” she added, “but you look very tired, in fact quite overdone, and unable to walk five miles, I am sure. If this is so, you had better forgive my frank disregard of ceremony; you see I have neglected it rather than let you go on, and perhaps fall ill by the way.”

Some people will doubtless say that our hero's not altogether unpleasing exterior had

much to do with this sympathy. I can only say that my opinion is, that it arose purely from the conviction, which would have impressed itself on anybody looking upon the traveller, that he was not fitted for the remaining journey without some rest.

“You make me feel very grateful. I have walked close upon forty miles, and must confess to the wish that Hilstone were not quite so far off. After a slight rest I shall be able to accomplish the remainder of my day’s intended journey.”

“Can you drink milk?” she asked. “The children brought it out with them; and there are some biscuits. But I will send to the house directly, if you need anything more refreshing or substantial.”

“Thank you. I am not fasting; but I will not refuse a glass of milk.”

She poured it out, making way slightly

for him at the same time, as though she thought she must not keep the poor fellow standing there, and yet must not by words imply the meaning that had to be conveyed somehow. Instinct struggled with the shackles of education, and freed itself. Edgar saw the kindly action, took both the glass and the delicately-proffered seat, and said, with a smile—

“I am not so worn out as your kind heart leads you to imagine. Perhaps my pale face misled you; I am told it is not a good guide.”

“From it I judged partly. Have you,” she added, with all a woman’s nature, desirous to know something more of her companion’s social standing—his air and language certainly proved him to be a gentleman, but this word has a sadly vague meaning now-a-days — “have you

voluntarily inflicted this long walk upon yourself?"

"Quite. And, to be frank, 'tis the happiest day I have had for six weeks." And he sighed. His new acquaintance might have been about eighteen years of age. Her figure was every way slight; her eyes were blue, but not so deep a blue as Annette's; her hair light-brown; her complexion transparent, and withal bespeaking the security of health; her whole face full and fresh. She was what is meant, I believe, by "pretty," eminently pretty. A closer scrutiny pronounced her thoughtful, which girls with an exterior such as she possessed seldom are; clever, perhaps eccentric, as some people understand it. The mouth showed little respect for old opinions and standing orders. She might have been the death of a "correct" mamma.

“ Ah !” she replied to Edgar’s very open avowal, “ I suppose that nature gladdens you to-day. Still, we have had as glorious sunshine more than once these last six weeks. Or, perhaps you were born under the star of wayward romance ? In that case, you *must* be miserable at times, I suppose. One is not granted the heart without the heart’s-pains of the poet. There is no help for it.”

“ Do you know I fancy there is, even though I thus contradict you. If you ascribe to me the sorrows of a poet, you must allow me also the experience of one.”

“ And what is it, if I may ask ?” was the reply.

“ That to this extent I can bear out your idea. The *childhood* of a poet must necessarily be miserable ; for the poetical tem-

perament requires, for the possibility of happiness, one, if not all, of three things : to be free, to be loved, and, what is much the same thing, to be admired."

"But he still requires these things, does he not, when he has left childhood behind?"

"Doubtless ; but the chances are that he will obtain them ; at any rate, they are possible. But the child cannot possess them. He certainly is not free. He must not think for himself ; he is made to know his inferiority to older people ; he is alternately coaxed and petted, and in each case equally shown the inequality. He is, of course, simply taught to obey. To lead him with a silken chain would be the easiest of all offices ; but this does not come into nursery traditions ; they drive him, and he kicks. He has no chance of being

understood; his pretty sentiments will be ridiculed, his delicate feelings pronounced soft; he will be told not to be silly. The poor little fellow does not understand himself. He feels he is not like other children, and he cannot tell why; and that is one great source of misery. And surely he who is not understood cannot be admired. True, there is little apparently to admire in that child who, from the fear of ridicule, has become reserved, and, from constant scoffs, grown self-defensively haughty; nothing to admire in his selfish love of solitude, his impossible notions, his silent wandering into an all (but to him) unseen dreamland. But, all this time, in his little heart, he wants to be noticed. He has not heard the word fame; but Ambition has taken root in his soul, and already begins to overshadow Peace!"

“And when,” asked his companion, “do you think he ceases to be necessarily miserable?”

“Let us follow him. At sixteen, at the latest, he will fall in love with some one or other; and I think it is strange if some one or other will not fall in love with him in return. It will be probably but a temporary passion, but still it is of his own choice. He is free to a certain extent; and if a stupid attempt is made to restrict him, why, he probably takes the chain and snaps it in two. I think a boy with the down on his lip, a fair fancy, and slight peculiarities, will not lack admirers.”

“Still,” urged the young lady, “he may not be loved by the one whose love he would seek.”

“Maybe not. But, even so, he has by this time learned to sing—sorry songs,

perhaps—but he sings them. And allow the poet, be he neophyte or adept, the exercise of his art, and he cannot exclusively suffer. At least, his will not be the fearful misery which fastens on the child who longs for something in the darkness, but cannot seek it, because he does not know that what he lacks is light !”

“ Yet, how shall he escape the trammels to which, in a materially civilized age, the poet is doomed ?” rejoined his interested companion.

“ In that,” answered Edgar, “ he shares but the lot of common humanity. Of course the fineness of his nature makes these trammels more insupportable ; but I do not say he suffers not as much as the rest of his kind ; far from it—all his feelings are more intense than other people’s. But what I would argue, is that he has no longer to

undergo what is undergone by the helpless child, who knows not for what he would receive sympathy, and therefore never finds it; who cries bitterly in secret, and would play the haughty hero in public, and who, from being told that he is absurd, begins to half suspect that he is so. Oh ! it is terrible. The ordinary infant tries to speak, and the fond mother understands the effort, and helps his utterance. The infant poet fain would sing—for this is his utterance—and he cannot. He knows not what he lacks, only that he does lack something, and is wretched.”

The girl had listened attentively, and with aroused interest. She smiled at the simple ingenuousness which thus analyzed unwittingly, but to her how evidently, what had been the speaker's own lot.

“ You have felt all this ? ” she said. As

she spoke, he seemed to awake to the consciousness of his discursive egotism.

“You must pardon me,” he answered, “I have talked to no one but an illiterate old woman for some weeks, so have forgotten the necessity of decent reticence. Yet, affectation is idle, and, if I judge rightly, to you would be displeasing. I *have* felt it all; the pain that rarely ceased—was never healed; the long vigils in my little crib, the tears upon my puny pillow, the rending of the heart, when words—I now fancy not really harsh—had been spoken to me; the dreary double-ache of want, and ignorance of what that want was. Oh! cancel all hope, shut out fame, love—all; but do not send me back to renew those feelings which none but a child can experience, and all the orators in the world could not describe. Thank Heaven, it ends! The glorious time

comes ; the splendid conviction flashes across the boy that he is a poet. The vain longing which, hitherto, he could neither resist nor comprehend, takes form ; splendid visions of the ideal arise, the ideal—if I may so speak—actualized. He feels, analyzes, sings, and the want is filled up. And, I think, that the young gentleman may begin to be happy.”

“ Your ideas are more hopeful than mine. But you—you are not happy yet ? ”

“ No, but I was six weeks ago. My present misery does not depend on my natural disposition ; though, I dare say, its intensity does. But we must all be sad sometimes.”

“ Not for six weeks ! ” she said, wickedly. Then, more seriously, “ You have been unfortunate ? ”

“ Very ! ”

“ You have lost—”

She would not trespass further. Edgar came to her assistance.

“Not what you were going to guess. I have loved.”

“And not been loved?” she added with a spontaneous expression of manifest surprise, extremely complimentary. She perceived it, and slightly blushed, and turned away her eyes.

“Nay, I was loved—*am* loved.”

She turned her face back towards him.

“O these forms! these forms! I suppose it is something of this—this—this social slavery; these absurd hypocrisies and flimsy distinctions. I think love ought to be more powerful than custom.”

“It never will be.”

“I will not prophesy. But, see you those men leading the hay? Well, I am not going to be enamoured of any of them;

but if I were, wed him I would. I suppose you think me a traitor to my sex." She tried to say it defiantly, but she evidently was anxious for the reply.

"No, my pretty friend ! I do not. But all women are not so courageous. They cannot bear the scoffs of their own sex, and the neglect of the other. And, though *you* would brave them, they would embitter your life hopelessly."

He briefly told his story.

"In such a case," he continued, "there is but one way to satisfy love ; namely, your way. But if you were a man, you would hesitate to lead a girl along that path, the pursuit of which would make relentless society her enemy for ever. It never forgives the woman who marries without its consent. For yourself, you may be strong ; but perhaps you have not yet felt what it is

to decide for the being whom you love ; and as woman, you can never fully feel it. No, no : I must wait. I do not cherish, I do not discard, hope. I would forget, as far as is consistent with the honest and faithful retention of love. But meanwhile, I would work."

"Poor fellow !" she said kindly. Those only who have heard that word in a gentle girl's mouth can tell what a sweet sound it has about it. "Poor fellow ! it is very hard. You are right : I understand you perfectly. May you be rewarded ! I have strange notions ; but, as you say, they affect only myself."

They had become strangely familiar in a wondrously limited interval of time. How was it ? Firstly, I think, they had not the disadvantage of being introduced to each other. If there be one proceeding espec-

ally calculated to create restraint and suspicion, it is that ceremony, so highly favoured by our time and nation, of introduction. And secondly, if Fate, which, not to wrong it, is usually so ill-natured in these matters, will deviate occasionally from its wonted allegiance to all that is proper, and throw two such romantic personages together on a July afternoon in a hay-field, without due supervision, who shall marvel at the result? I will venture to say that twenty meetings, *sub iisdem trabibus*, under the same roof-tree, with even the advantageous accompaniments of what the irreverent of these days call a "tea-fight," would not have drawn them a thousandth part so closely together. And, as for poetry, why our worthy religious people have not crushed the whole thing long ago, I am at an utter loss to conceive. About its wily, insidious,

undermining character, there have long since ceased to be two opinions. I know that a certain class have tried to fight the demon with his own carnal weapons; but, inclined as I am to brandish sword and pen against this evil spirit, I must, for the sake of honesty, confess that so far this wicked monster has had by far the best of it. No, no: make an end of him. He is a dangerous fellow, and very bewitching withal. Hymns and proverbs have no chance against him: there is nothing for it but complete annihilation.

Just witness whither, dear reader, you are being carried. Not content with thus much, the young lady, with whose name we are as yet unacquainted, asked Edgar if he gave much time to composition. The answer was natural enough. He had published once. She had not read his book, but she thought

she remembered the name of the poem, and seeing notices of it in one or two literary journals. Did she ask too much? Would he repeat some of it to her? She feared she was intrusive. No, not in the least. Only, fortunately, he could perhaps gratify her, without doing what he confessed he rather disliked. He had just finished another poem; it was in his knapsack.

Poor Edgar! He carried his heart, Annette's love, and his only other treasure, his new poem, about with him. It was natural enough. He had but little; why was he not to cherish it dearly? He undid his knapsack and took out the first canto. He read two or three leaves, and would have returned it to its place, but the pause was greeted by the most earnest—

“Do go on!”

He went on. The same phrase was re-

peated at every attempt to desist from a further recital; and the reader soon found himself at the end of the canto. His companion was delighted: she would ever be grateful if he would read it all. Mamma and papa were at the vicarage: she would tell the children not to come and interrupt them: there was no fear of being disturbed. Was he to refuse? I only know he did not. And do you, dear, sympathizing reader! blame him for hailing as his first listener one so eager, so impassioned? I cannot find it in my pen to upbraid him.

He began the second canto, nor paused at its conclusion. His companion never interrupted him, nor made any exclamations, as, I am sorry to say, young ladies too often do. But when he came, himself almost overpowered, to the final passage composed upon the hill at Glendover, and closed the manu-

script, and looked up, the tears were slowly streaming down the fair girl's cheeks. She smiled though, and broke out enthusiastically—

“I understand better now what you said. Oh! if I could create such fancies, such scenes, and give to them such language, I could not but be happy. I should love only myself, were I as you.”

It was the first time Edgar had been face to face, and alone, with any one whose tears he had drawn from their still depths by the power of his song. He felt, indeed, he *was* a poet. There had been a few stealthy tears at Fairfort, but he had scarcely seen them, and had turned from them before they fell. They were not such as these. He had swept the chords of his yet almost untutored lyre; and a girl, young, sincere, and beautiful, poured out her excited heart, tearfully re-

sponding to the touching cadence of his notes, and the impassioned power of his theme. Yes, Edgar Huntingdon ! if thou art really destined to reap the poet's fullest harvest, never wilt you cherish the richest and most golden, as much as thou now dost cherish this first and solitary sheaf !

It was half-past six, and evident that these two sympathizing souls, so strangely thrown together for a few fleeting moments, must separate ; as the world goes, probably for ever. Edgar rose, and held out his hand for a farewell. She pointed in the direction of the house.

" Were that mine," she said, " you should honour it, one night, instead of going on alone to Hilstone. I am not ashamed of my wish ; but if I proposed such a thing, I should——"

" Do very wrong," he suggested.

"I was not going to say that, but—kill mamma; though, of course," she added laughingly, "that would be wrong, too."

"Take my advice, my pretty little friend, and do as other people do. You may be only as silly as they are in consequence; but even that is better than for a girl to outrage public opinion, however ridiculous. I thank you for your kindness, and hope we shall meet again under as favourable auspices."

"I hope with better," she answered; "for, indeed I pray your love may yet prosper."

"May I ask the name of one who is thus generous to me? Mine is Edgar Huntingdon."

"Oh, Florence Laughnan. I shall remember yours. Good-bye, then."

"Good-bye, Florence! and be sure, if you do not hear from me in two years, you never will."

They pressed each other's hands tenderly as they parted. The tears were in her eyes, and, I confess, in his too. They came too easily of late. When he reached the stile, he looked round : she was gazing after him. There was a mutual waving of the hand, which had, in both instances, I believe, first mounted to the lips. Poor Edgar ! Poor Florence ! He, loving and loved—but fruitlessly : she—and I almost think hers was the sterner plight—longing both to love and be loved, and lacking either.

CHAPTER II.

“I have marked
A thousand blushing apparitions
To start into her face.”

Much Ado about Nothing.

THE next day Edgar continued his journey. He was now but twenty miles from London. As he walked on, the strange meeting of yesterday occupied for a while his thoughts; but his mind soon reverted to the old feelings of unalterable tenderness for Annette Fairfort, broken now and then by the less wholesome day-dreams of ambition. About noon he passed through the little town

where he had spent his school-days. He crossed the churchyard, noting with a smile the spot by the footpath where Bingham had refused reconciliation, and threatened revenge. He turned back, and sat him down where he could gaze upon the valley, along which he had so often roamed. Five years had passed since he last beheld it. Five years! They might have been five hundred. He was changed—marvellously changed, he thought; he asked himself, if for the better. And I think that, had it not been for the one great sorrow at his heart, he would have answered readily “yes!” And even despite this supreme grief, had he not grown more rational as he had grown older; and did not, as Longfellow expresses it, “the world and he look each other more calmly in the face?” He would not have returned to his school-days again. “Si quis

thing.

rney.

idon.

g of

its;

el-

te

Deus," he said, recalling a sentence from the "De Senectute," which he had first read in this quiet town, "mihi largiatur ut repuerescam, valde recusem." Yes, even if thus only the great burden could have been removed. He appreciated the dignity of suffering, the rare privilege of being permitted to endure: these he would not barter for the monotony of boyhood. He thanked God that he was a man!—a man invested with all man's duties, not the least noble of which is to bear. He was even grateful, and begged but for one thing more, the ability to labour. And, as he sat, another old reminiscence seemed whimsically to steal upon him: it was as if a leaf from the oft-thumbed classical lexicon were handed to him, and he read, "Esculapius, the son of Apollo!" Verily, there might yet be balm in Gilead.

Five years ! He walked through the town. No one recognized him ; he met no familiar face. It has a touch of melancholy in it, this visiting the scene of our boyhood, and finding not one landmark to register and keep intact our name. Alas ! not the shadow of a shade !

He entered London by St. John's Wood, and came to the lodgings of Pampesteria and his daughter. He could not pass. They were not within. He would wait, he said ; he was not sorry to rest ; so he sat by the open window. " David Copperfield " was before him ; he remembered what pleasure its perusal had, not long ago, afforded him ; but now all Micawber's drollery, even his " few valedictory remarks," failed to coax a smile from that solemn countenance. Turning over the leaves almost mechanically, he came to the page where he had once before paused,

in which Agnes, who had promoted the marriage with Dora, confesses to Copperfield that she had loved him all her life. In the margin, in Catalina's handwriting, was this sentence,—he scarcely knew what he was doing—he read it:—

“Poor Agnes, how I pity you! Happier the girl who cannot help but love, yet finds the magician's spell, and lo! Love loses shape, and is only intenser gratitude!”

A change came over the face of him who read. It lost its mournful, without regaining its joyous, expression. It was the mingling of intense anxiety with utter powerlessness; nor did it vary till Pampesteria and Catalina returned. They had been in the Hampstead fields: the father sitting in the sun, the daughter reading to him.

“I am sure you look better,” said Edgar, when he had told the Spaniard of his long

journey on foot. "You are not so pale. What do you think, Catalina?"

"Oh, yes, he is better; I am sure he is: I have been telling him so!"

Consummate actors! Neither, in their hearts, would be surprised, however much they would grieve, to have to follow his hearse to-morrow. The girl saw how forced were the expressions of their friend; and he noticed that, as her lips moved in assurance, they blanched with inward terror. Pampesteria guessed not the hollowness of their hopes, and tried to be what they told him he really appeared. He gazed fixedly at Edgar, never dreaming of saying that *he* looked better; for in sooth he did not look it. Pampesteria's gaze was the gaze of one who would have gone barefoot round the world to render that man happy who had so strenuously and generously endeavoured, but

utterly failed, to make him so. Yet had the kindly benefactor done much. So far, at least, he had been the human means of preserving the father to watch over the child, and the child from such wretchedness as it was impossible—while, thank Heaven, unnecessary—to imagine. Impotent, in the face of Edgar's grief, to remove which he would have given his blood, drop by drop, and torture by torture, Pampesterria leaned back silently in his chair. The action was not lost. Neither spoke ; but it was evident that they understood each other.

“What have you been doing at Afrel?—is not that the name of the place?” asked Catalina.

“Yes, Afrel. I have written another poem.”

“Oh, where is it?”

“In my knapsack, there.”

Had she known that it had been already read, and to the maiden whom Edgar had met yesterday, perhaps she would not have rushed so frantically to undo the knapsack, and extract the treasure, as she now did. The solution of this problem I leave to the gentler portion of my readers. As it was, she soon buried herself in the manuscript. Edgar tried to interest her father by descriptions, to himself painful enough, of his recent occupations; inventing, it must be owned, whenever his listener waxed attentive, and the true narrative failed. At length he had nothing more to tell, either of what had occurred or what had not. The Spaniard left the room, and Edgar approached the diligent peruser of his new poem.

“One minute,” she said; “you hurry me so. There, I have read it, in a way.”

“You have been reading ‘Copperfield,’ have you not?” And he took down the volume from the shelf where, on her entrance, she had hastily placed it. “What do you think of it?”

“Some of it I like much; but I find that Micawber tiresome. I suppose he is very amusing, only I don’t understand it. But I love Dora.”

“And Agnes?” Catalina coloured. Edgar went and sat beside her on the sofa. Since the morning of the fifteenth of June, when she had been so disappointed of her much-cherished scheme, she had been treated by him with advanced familiarity, as though she were a sister, but a much younger one, whom he was very fond of, and rather patronized. He had now discovered that more was in her heart than was shadowed in her exterior; but he thought that the simple

treatment would be still the best. He put his arm round her affectionately, yet in such a way that I think the action, had any one else been present, would have elicited no remark—nay, have attracted no attention. He opened the book at the passage upon which her note was penned.

“Who wrote this?” he said, smiling.

“Who is the magician?”

“You know my writing,” she answered;

“you know that I wrote that.”

He read aloud:—

“‘Happier the girl who cannot help but love, yet finds the magician’s spell, and lo! Love loses shape, and is only intenser gratitude.’”

“I did not mean you to see this,” she said, simply.

“Nor I to read it. I read it almost involuntarily; certainly without forethought.

Having read it, I thought it better to tell you."

"I do not blame you ; but it is a pity."

"Blind as I have been !" exclaimed Edgar, half impatiently, to himself, yet aloud. "You have seen no one else, or you would have been wiser."

"No, no. Do not rank woman so low as to suppose that they love the only thing they meet, by a mere weak necessity."

Her frankness amazed him. He said incautiously—

"But, Catalina, you know that my heart is not——"

"Mr. Huntingdon !" she exclaimed, with heightened colour, and breaking away from him, "why this ? I think you mistake. Did I love you *now*, as we speak of, think you I should stand here discussing it ?" Then she added, in a gentler tone, "Pardon

my abruptness, you do not deserve it; but I could not have borne *that*. Since you *have* read that sentence, read it correctly, at least. It says truly that love has lost shape. Judge how purely grateful I must be, when, disregarding what has been, and what you now know has been, I give you such an explanation." She went back to him. "Forgive my impetuosity."

"Forgive *me*," answered Edgar, his eyes beaming with thankfulness. "You have no reason to care about what, you say, has been. After all, it was but natural. We all of us cling to the nearest object, although the nearest is often the unworthiest. Yet, surely, Catalina, we shall love each other!"

"I trust so, in all but the rare sense of the word. You know that I would see you united to Miss Fairfort: this I would die

to effect. The feeling attending such a result would be joy—pure, and without a single regret. You know what this is; I cannot express it better.”

“It is, indeed, Catalina, as I love you. There is but one being whom I love better, and that is, differently. The day, I trust, will soon come when you will see how fortunate you were in escaping the linking of your lot with one who lives between suffering and exertion.”

Of this she was not convinced, though she had really conquered; but she said no more. He had sufficiently understood her; further words might lead him again astray. She had always called him “Mr. Huntingdon,” hitherto; henceforward she called him “Edgar.”

“Well, young lady, suppose you fasten up my knapsack again; I must be going.

See, you are leaving out my manuscript."

"Oh, but I have not read it properly yet; and, am I not to write it out? Nobody else would have patience to make out your wonderful handwriting. Did I copy the last so badly?"

"Not *very* badly; try again at this, then: you are a most useful secretary. But I am in no want of the poem, at present."

They parted with a complete understanding. As Edgar walked along Regent's Park, he mused upon Catalina's bravery. This unaided girl had fought her battle, and won. And he? His was not so difficult as hers, and yet was he repulsed at every point. What splendid courage! And they are accustomed to call woman "weak!" Bah! What a coward was he. She had no other object. He had the bar and literature, fifty

thousand things ; and in none found he solace. Was Annette as brave as that girl ? Very unsatisfactory, all of it.

He came to Park Crescent, and on into Regent Street. Once more was he in the crowd ; in the vast, palpitating, but pitiless heart of London. And all around him were moving, thinking—yes thinking—but *acting* too. Why could not he *act* likewise ? He felt that, of all the passers-by, he was the most insignificant. He suddenly became aware that he was not, at least, the most unnoticed. His knapsack, his dusty and travel-worn appearance his *nonchalant* wide-awake, were moving even Regent Street, not unaccustomed to fancy costumes, from its wonted indifference. He had a strong objection to Horace's "*monstrari digito.*" Fortunately he was within a few doors of the hatter on whom he usually bestowed his

moderate patronage. He would get rid of his pack, and re-appear with the crowning discovery of modern civilization—an ordinary head-piece. As his hand was on the door, a handsome carriage came rapidly up the street. He turned his head. A young lady bent forward in the direction whither so many eyes had been directed, and looked at Edgar. It was Annette Fairfort. I wonder what amount of comfort each derived from the pale countenance of the other?

Regent Street has quite recovered its composure, and Edgar Huntingdon the exterior of a decent citizen. But within a still on-rolling carriage a maiden's eyes are wet—a maiden's heart beats woefully.

CHAPTER III.

“ You think this cruel ! Take it for a rule—
No creature smarts so little as a fool.”

POPE'S *Prologue to the Satires*.

“ Cras ingens iterabimus æquor.”

HORACE.

It was the first week of August. Annette Fairfort was sitting in the quiet garden attached to her London home. She was pale—very pale indeed ; and he who could have gazed upon her cheek without at once divining that its pallor sprang from hapless love, either never knew the burning passion, or was, in truth, a sorry physiognomist. She

still was beautiful; but her beauty was as the beauty of Juno, when Jove sought Io. Her father had at last been moved by her altered looks, and strange absence of mind whenever society demanded her presence. Of course he was quite certain that this ridiculous state of things would not endure; but he was, meanwhile, chagrined that she, who had been one of the chief ornaments of many a stately gathering, the most regarded, the most sought-after, should now be but little better than a spectre in these happy scenes—lost, silent, dejected. He was not fond of having his family affairs bandied about, from mouth to mouth; besides, annoyed and mortified as he was, he loved his daughter in his own way. Unable, from his own constitution, to suppose that she could suffer materially, and for any length of time, from the line of conduct which he

had thought it proper for him to pursue, he yet grieved, more or less, for her present frame of mind, and was willing to try every cure—save one. So he never gave Annette the invitations that were still sent her, but took to himself the trouble and responsibility of refusing them. His Lordship was unavoidably detained in town; doubtless, retirement in the country would be better for Annette than remaining in the midst of scenes in which she no longer played her part.

Annette, who saw how the invitations were refused for her, was grateful for, at least, this. She who had love, even bootless love, for her constant mate, could find no companionship in the nonentities of ball-rooms, and the stilted sycophants of society. She cherished her treasure in secret; folding her sorrow, even as a restless babe, to her

breast ; weeping over it, certainly, but preferring the tears thus shed, to all smiles otherwise. And, had it not been for one noble individual, she would have found that perfect solitude which she so earnestly desired, and so sedulously sought. The Earl of Glenbarton was the only remaining intruder ; and his Lordship was, certainly, a most persistent bore. Scarcely a day passed but he made his appearance. Entitled by his connexion, through his cousin Lord Allanroy, with the Fairforts, he could not well be avoided. Were Annette not at home, he could, and would, say, that he would sit down and await her return ; yet this familiarity, which had so many disadvantages, afforded no countervailing benefits. His Lordship's sluggish nature, and stupid conversation, entirely prevented poor Annette from finding in him either friend or even

intimate. There was no one who could seek her more successfully ; no one who, having sought her, could offer her less consolation or amusement, than the Earl of Glenbarton. He could not see how weary Miss Fairfort was of him. He had heard of her love-passage with Huntingdon, with whom he was but slightly acquainted, and whom he looked down upon as some scribbling adventurer. His Lordship verily believed, that he was doing the young lady the most delicate of kindnesses, regarding himself, in fact, as a sort of well-bred Samaritan, pouring oil into Annette's rather obstinate wounds. What a relief it must be to her, thought he, to have some one to assist her in recovering from the insidious intrusion of that literary puppy. Oh ! if he could only have seen the balance in which Miss Fairfort weighed his noble self and that adventurer !

He was ever proposing rides, drives, picture galleries, with an earnest pertinacity, which could be met generally but by acceptance. In these schemes Frank also was a victim. He was not, however, very particular just now as to what happened to himself, and so yielded unresistingly.

Annette was reading Chateaubriand's "Atala." Whether the author in hand, or another author of not quite such established repute, brought the tears as far as her eyes, I cannot decide. It is not unlikely that both had something to do with them; the one suggesting the other, and the other causing that unfortunate melting of the heart. It was past the hour when the Earl generally called. What if he gave her, to-day, a respite? The hope had no sooner presented itself than she heard the conservatory door

open. She looked up. Her torturer was coming across the grass.

How am I to describe that visit? I have once written it as it actually occurred, and blotted out my accurate description. Once already, dear and patient reader, have you endured the infliction of a conversation in which the Earl of Glenbarton took part. I cannot be sure that that one scene has not prevented some people, less gifted with long-suffering than you, from getting on so far as the present stage of this chronicle. And yet I must needs give some idea of what took place in that garden. Remember, then, that his Lordship did not lay aside those innumerable “ers” and “yerves” which, for your sake, I omit. He began by original inquiries about Annette’s health, remarking how anxious everybody was upon the subject, now that she had been pleased so to

seclude herself. He remarked upon the book with which she had been occupied, and which she still held in her hand; and to all her observations that Chateaubriand was such a real poet, with instincts for the beautiful, sensitiveness to pathos, sympathy with the sublime, and so on, he replied by “yerves” and “ers,” and stoppages innumerable. Poor Annette was squeezing her book most violently. The octavo threatened to dwindle into a pocket edition. The interesting strictures of Glenbarton were continued; “Atala” had all but lost its binding; another moment, and the back was fairly off. What on earth had the man come for? He had never been so wretchedly inane as this morning. I will not deny that it is the peculiarity of persons who are in love, to find everything and everybody more or less stupid that feed not, some way, the predominant feeling. Com-

monplace talk becomes more commonplace than ever ; every-day questions, hypocrisy and humbug ; even superior conversation detestable. No wonder, then, that this heavy Earl was unendurable. But this morning, as I have said, he surpassed, in the art of being tiresome, even his wonted self. He surely, Annette thought, was not so absurd as to think *this* either amusing or instructive ; it was not even politics. Heavens ! when was it going to finish ? Her book was becoming a mere wreck.

Again I am sorely tempted to put upon paper his Lordship's own words. But, no ; I forbear. Plainly, then, at last the Earl of Glenbarton told Annette, in his way, that he "—er—yers—loved her !" What could she answer ? She said simply that she had not anticipated it—the words, I believe (I, who know nothing of these things, offer this

opinion diffidently), much in vogue upon these occasions—the words she had uttered to another declaration of love, but with what a different meaning ! Indeed, she had not anticipated it. It had never occurred to her, for one moment, as I think it might have occurred, that her noble connection meant love-making. She had considered the persecution as coming from a man who wanted something to do, and so bored *her*. That was all.

Oh, how indignant she felt ! This paltry nonsense from a coroneted fool to her ! Her, who had listened to the glorious outpouring, the splendid eloquence, the wild, fervid confession of Edgar Huntingdon ! That sudden burst of feeling—the onward rush—the living language—the resistless torrent of *his* passionately uttered love, in the glorious sunset, on the hill at Glendover ! And now

she must listen to this bald, limping trash ! She tried to restrain herself, remaining silent for a time, that she might find words diluted enough to match the stuttering poverty of this philandering shallow-pate. The Earl construed her silence into an approach, at least, towards consent, and was about to continue his measured protestations, when he was interrupted.

“As for the feelings, my Lord, which you do me the honour to profess—pardon me, express, I would say—I cannot accept, since I do not at all reciprocate them. I may as well own”—she tried to be kind, though she did not think that her adorer was in very great agony—“that my heart is engaged—irrevocably. The person who compliments me by wishing to have my hand, must ask Lord Fairfort. You, my Lord, are too chivalrous.”

“Yers—”

He was going to speak.

“Pardon me, my Lord!” she said, raising her hand; “you had better hear me, and then this—this—affair”—she could find no better word—“will be over. I will mention it to no one if I can avoid doing so, and shall expect from your Lordship a like discretion.”

“Yers—er—certainly—yers—if you—er—wish it. But I shall—er—never—er—forget the — ee — pleasant conversations we——”

This was too much : this *was* ridiculous. Conversations, forsooth ! O my Lord ! This time Annette was obliged to turn away her head ; or, chagrined as she was, she would have laughed in his face. Enough, enough ! Go thy way, O heavy Earl ! This story has no more need of thee !

Annette hastened to her room, that none might witness her indignant tears. It was not that *she* was insulted. But was she not Edgar's shrine—*his* sanctuary? Had he not placed there his precious love? A blind dullard had walked impiously up and laid his stupid, sacrilegious hand upon the tabernacle! Verily, Attila's threat had been fulfilled: the Hun *had* stalled his steed upon the high altar of St. Peter's! She, who had been consecrated as the holy place of *his* devotion, his beautiful poet's worship, to be defiled by the footstep of that profane intruder! Well was it that the true adorer was not witness of this indignant wail! or, I fear Catalina Pampesteria might have been possibly at last triumphant, and ere the sun went down, Annette Fairfort the stealthily wedded wife of Edgar Huntingdon. But God sends not those who resist

to the best of their puny human strength, temptations that transcend a man's endurance.

In the room in Pall Mall with which I fear, dear reader! you are too well acquainted, sat, the evening of the same day, Edgar and Horace Cooper. The latter was not likely to be very much benefited by the companionship, however intentionally generous, of one who, cheerful as he might strive to be, now plainly battled with the same enemy as his less resisting friend. Cooper had undergone every change and shade of woe: and he must have been a wonderful adept in the art of concealment who could have hidden from *his* eyes the slightest pang of suffering. And Edgar's suffering was pretty apparent. Since his return from Afrel, he had again spent his seven hours a day in King's Bench Walk. Must it be

confessed that he had spent them in vain? Still was he the absent idler, unable to concentrate his thoughts upon any but the one engrossing subject. Two out of the three years' preparation for the bar were nearly over. He was sorely tried: he had striven patiently, fearlessly, manfully; he had fought a hard, protracted fight, and not gained one inch of ground; he almost feared that he had receded. He looked desperately round: he would not give in, but he would change his tactics. He would retreat, and take up a new position. He closed "Taylor on Evidence;" returned "Chitty on Contracts" to the shelf; "Archbold" he laid aside. He would join the crowd of pleasure-seekers and be off to the Continent. He would follow the orthodox route and be faithful to the Hand-book; his mind should rest; his regret, if possible, have a respite;

his thoughts, repose. There should be an armistice. He would yield to all this, because he deemed it his duty. To persuade Cooper to be his companion, was the object of his visit this evening.

"I gain no benefit," he said, "by remaining here and blindly adhering to one course, that I now acknowledge useless for the purposes of discipline. I shall follow the herd—up the Rhine—over the Tyrol—anywhere they lead. I shall be an ordinary tourist, laughing, grumbling, and yet determined somehow to be pleased. I shall experimentalize, and try the effects of a totally different system."

"I think," said Cooper, half-sadly, half-childishly, "we had better lie down in the woods, like the babies in the story-books, and let the robins come and cover us with dead leaves."

Edgar tried to humour him :

“Nay, Horace ! that time has not yet come : the leaves are still green. And, I tell you, I want you to come with me and be my ‘fidus Achates ;’ or you shall be the ‘pius Æneas’ if you prefer the character, and I will be the other ; your ‘alter ego.’ You *must* go !”

“Go all that way ! Over the sea ! You have always been kind to me, Edgar ; you are cruel now.”

This from a young man of twenty-seven, who had been twice to Constantinople, and had of course thought nothing of it. What utter prostration !

“Oh, it is not so far : and we will turn back whenever you wish. You *must* go ; I am sure it will do you good.”

“Good !” exclaimed the other, despondingly ; “good ! No, no, Edgar ! you know .

better than that. Who waters a dead stick?"

Edgar saw his repugnance, but was not the less convinced that change of air and scene could do much. There was evidently but one argument that would persuade; he did not hesitate to use it. He made use of Cooper's own metaphor.

"One waters a dead stick, Horace, when the stick is fastened, as the prop of a yet living tree. *I am the tree: will you refuse to be my support? You cannot imagine what good your society will do me; do come.*"

Cooper did not see the *ruse*; but had presence of mind enough to be generous, and to tell in his turn one of those falsehoods dear to Heaven.

"I think, after all, it would do me good; I ought not to stay here—I will go."

Neither suspected the other: they had practised a mutual deception.

“Bravo!” said Edgar; “you make me quite merry. We must start to-morrow for Ostend, unless you have some other plan.”

“You know I can have none. When we travel, ask me no questions; we will go where you wish. Your pleasure in the matter will be mine also.”

“Very well—cheer up. We will enjoy ourselves. But I must be going. We start at two—afternoon. I will call again, though, before that time—good-bye.”

CHAPTER IV.

“What, dost thou weep? Come nearer then; I love,
Because thou art a woman.”

Timon of Athens.

EDGAR was returning, about midnight, from making his farewell visit to Pampes-terra and Catalina. The streets about the Quadrant were alive with light, and with outcast figures flaunting in tawdry splendour. Folding-doors swung incessantly backwards and forwards, as sin in crimson and purple sought ingress or exit. A famous saloon, close by, was pouring out its bespangled crew. The dance was done; the double-

bass was already snoring in tones as deep as those of his now unstrung instrument ; the lights were out ; the master of the ceremonies, *beau-ideal* of laughable conceit and undignified puppeyism, had taken off his snow-white choker and his strip of silk riband, and was twirling his moustaches into the particular shape most protective against possible injury from restless slumber. But *they* were yet wide awake and afoot—the midnight butterflies—the bedecked—the glancing, gliding, anxious, would-be attractive forms—laughing, whirling, chattering, cursing—the elegant—the beautiful—the fallen !—hanging about supper-rooms, divans, oyster-shops, all down the Haymarket. Edgar passed through it all ; it was on his way home. When he first saw these things, I state no fiction when I say that they had wrung from him brackish, because he knew

unavailing, tears. He had seen it all ; he had avoided it ; he had not been contaminated. But the sight had filled him with a benevolent regret, a philanthropic pain. Now, he had been in London nearly two years, and he was accustomed to it. Of course, it grieved him still ; his delicate sensibility, apart even from his religious feeling, was up in arms ; his temperament revolted at such unhallowed orgies. That unbent figure, that rapid step, those fixed eyes, told the motley group that he was made for something better than the bacchanalian profligacy they themselves despised, and they stepped aside.

The moon looked down upon all this unholy concourse : Edgar, the Poet, the Lover, the Christian, thus trebly-pure, alone gazing upon her troubled face. He stood by the Duke of York's column : the beneficent

light touched the trees and the house-tops, staying to throw a brighter halo around the grand old towers of Westminster, and a look which seemed born of kindly interest upon the more ambitious brother rising by its side. It was a scene such as he loved, for the Poet's mind lives in contrasts. I think he would have stood there long; but some one immediately behind him spoke. He did not catch what was said; but as he turned he saw hastily that it was a young girl who had spoken. He had been in one of his loftiest and purest visions; in which incongruously enough, perhaps, Annette Fairfort, and the politics of this mighty nation, and the millions of prayers offered up within that immemorial Abbey, and the sad, erring ways of the ex-communicate race from whose thoroughfares he had just emerged, were mixed up. It was probably the sudden

waking from this vague dream that chiefly caused his abrupt manner. He scarcely gave it a thought; but he concluded naturally enough that he was addressed by one whose acquaintance he would have at all times shunned—and, at this moment, with peculiar abhorrence. So, without further notice of the intrusion, he gave up his meditations, and turned with an impatient gesture, little usual to him, homewards. He walked along the Strand and entered the Temple. As he stood at the threshold of his chambers in Garden Court, some one from behind him said timidly—

“You dropped this, sir!”

He turned and raised his hat; for it was not one of his own sex who addressed him. To all appearance one of the very gentlest of the other. She was very small, yet of infinite elegance of figure: her face was of

that order of beauty which we so justly and discriminately call "sweet," yet it was almost a child's. I know not if eyes are ever really of a violet colour; at least hers seemed so: her hair, not plentiful, but exquisitely fine, was that shade of brown which is denominated "chesnut." Her complexion was pure, at the expense of health: consumption had stamped upon it at once its lustre and its seal. She could not be more than seventeen, if yet so much. She was going; she had given Edgar a letter, which he had found was his.

"When did I drop this?" he asked.

"A quarter of an hour ago, I should think," she answered, in the same timid tone.

"Where?"

"I don't know the name of the—of the place, but you were standing by that column."

“What column? Oh! the Duke of York’s—I remember. But why did you not give it me before?”

“I tried, but—but—you would not notice me; you—you frightened me, sir!”

“Did you speak to me by that column?”

“Yes; but you—you would not notice me.”

Edgar then recalled the circumstance.

“Oh, indeed! I beg your pardon for my—my rudeness; but I thought—” He checked himself, and looked full into her eyes. They were fast filling with tears, and a blush suffused her delicate countenance. “Am I wrong,” he added, “in fancying that you have not often been out at this hour, alone?”

So—so timidly, and with downcast face—

“No, sir; not often.”

They were standing at the foot of the

staircase, with the light from the lamp in the court upon them. She was turning away.

“ I live here,” said Edgar, himself more confused than he had ever been in his life before. “ If you would—would rest, you are welcome.”

He could see her lock her small hands convulsively together. It seemed as though she would have answered him, for her lips parted, but no words came; only more—more tears. But through them she gazed at him, as though she would have searched into the most hidden depths of his nature. At last she said, in the same shrinking manner,

“ I will—no—I thank—you, sir—good-bye.”

She turned away, and he was passing from the threshold to his rooms; but before

he had mounted half a dozen steps, he heard a hurried rustling. She was coming back; she was again at his side.

“Oh, sir!” she exclaimed, piteously, “help me, help me! how, I know not, but help me, sir! for God’s love, help me!”

“Come with me, then—nay, go first.”

As he went upstairs behind her, he could see her whole frame trembled—was it with fear? They entered his chambers; she sank down upon a chair, covering her face with her hands. Edgar took up a book, as if he would read. At the end of some five minutes, he laid it down, and said—

“Come, tell me your story; I see you have one to tell. I wish to be of use to you, if it be possible. Forget those tears for a time. I listen.”

How she related her story I am powerless to describe. A girl’s unfettered agony—

.

and such was hers—baffles all description. How to give even a faint idea of a narrative in which there were even more sobs than words, and which tempests of tears constantly interrupted altogether? Attempt it I will not. The story itself, though, I humbly thank Heaven, not very common, had in it little of originality. A similar one has been told before; and I much fear that others of a like nature will again be narrated. Men have not yet ceased to lie, nor women to believe and suffer. Upon many particulars she dwelt which I would fain omit. Hers was simply a tale of a girl, living most peacefully and secludedly far away from towns, granting clandestine visits, and consenting to clandestine meetings, with a complete stranger, in order to relieve the monotony of a country existence; of a man skilled (at least she thought so) in all the ways

•

of winning, professing the wildest attachment, and quickly gaining it in return; of proposed marriage; of a maiden's doubts; of sophistries a thousand thousand times repeated, but new, and persuasive, and specious to that young, untutored heart; of her desiring to have a parent's assent and blessing; of his urging that such must necessarily follow the completed object of their wishes; of her still unconquered fears, and his still urged and specious entreaties.

“He succeeded in his persuasions. I left my home with him,” she said. “Three days we travelled, I noticed not in what direction. He treated me with the greatest respect, as one who still woos. On the third night we stopped at a pretty village, whose name I did not ask—what was it to me? The next morning we were married—married most privately, and hurriedly.

Then for three more days we travelled, the familiarity of affection rendering me so happy, that 'happy' does not express it. On the fourth day, he found me writing. 'To whom?' he asked. 'To my father.' 'What about?' 'About our marriage,' I answered." And here the tears came again, faster, fuller, sadder than ever. "Oh! sir, do you believe me? He persuaded me not to write. Would I wait? I would not. I said, 'I *must* write now.' Again he persuaded; at last—oh! sir, at last he denied that—that we were married. He asked me—he insulted me—he asked me if—I cannot repeat it."

"I understand," said Edgar, quietly, and without raising his eyes. "Go on."

"He said he would marry no one else; he would swear it—that he would always love me; that he had deceived me only out of

love, and for my good ; that it was impossible he could marry. O, the agony of those moments ! I said I would seek the place where we were married — at this last word he laughed — if I sought it barefoot. He told me that if I would be wilful, he could not prevent it ; that it was very stupid of me ; that, even if I found the place, I should only discover that I was—yes, he said, a—a mistress ! If I remained with him, no one would know ; and he would always love me. He coaxed, threatened, tried to terrify me. I *would* go. And, as I rushed from him, the last words I heard were—O, horrible !”—and again she hid her burning face—“ that I could not undo the past ; and that though he had intended to be kind to me, since I would be obstinate, I might rot !”

Edgar started up, wildly. His flesh

shrank ; his eyes flashed. Then, with a reassumed calmness, he said,

“ Pardon me.. Go on.”

“ Many days, and all my money, were spent in seeking that village. It matters not now what mistakes I made ; what hardships, what insults I underwent. I found it. I called on the clergyman ; certainly, I had never seen him before. He had no curate, he said. What day had we been married ? I told him. He had been upwards of a hundred miles away. I must rest, he said. He was more than kind to me. He was out the whole day. At night he told me, frankly, that all his search had been in vain : he had discovered nothing. The church was always open. It was too true. I was not married ! Witnesses, I believed, there had been ; but I was sure I should not know them. I had

been, at the time, too timid to lift my eyes. Clearly enough, now, I had been deceived ; cleverly, successfully deceived. I had been made to enter the church alone, and in a large cloak. We left it by a side door. This, I remember, that not more than four other people were present. The clergyman thought I should return home, and gave me money. I said I would. I made my way back to the place where I had first heard what was now too evidently the truth. I knew the road well, now. I did not expect, I did not wish, to find him. There was a note for me ; it was this."

Edgar rose, took and read it :—

"By the time you receive this, I shall be far away. If you choose to waste your time in bootless pursuit, do so. You must have already discovered the uselessness of

trying to prove what does not exist. If you take the trouble to consider, you will perceive that you cannot even prove I have ever seen you. Do as you will; but you will only thus reap one more penalty for your obstinacy, viz., publicity.

“WILLIAM BOLTON.”

The handwriting was evidently a feigned one. Edgar returned the letter, and resumed his seat: she her narration.

“The harsh words, at least, were unnecessary; for, heaven knows! I had no intention of seeking him. God grant we may never meet! But to return home with such a story, after such conduct! Impossible! I came to London, and obtained work, by which I made eightpence a day. O, the life I led; the things I heard; the things I saw among those with whom I worked! But I

was starving. Even this work, at the end of three weeks, was taken away; and then—nay, what then?—what you see: me in this town, alone and desolate.”

Wilder, faster, longer than before were the tears that fell from those surcharged eyes. He did not attempt to stay them. He sat opposite to her, gazing upon that passionately-wailing form, and giving himself up to his own strange thoughts. This seemed no fiction, no artificial passion. The story told like a true one, as far as it went; but it was evident that half was left unsaid. It was only a sketch, a mere faint outline, with all the vivid colouring away. But his own imagination supplied that; the yielding of the ignorant girl of—she looked but—sixteen, removed by her secluded life from instructive intercourse, to the first man who ever wooed her; the virgin love; the con-

fidling trust; the being led astray; the sacrificing of first principles; the flight; the credited marriage; the first ecstasy of fondness; the brutal confession; the agony; the doubt; the clinging hope; the bold resolve; the long, weary, fasting days of unaided search; the discovery; the full dawning of the horrible truth; the sense of utter desolation; the burning shame; the longing for, yet the turning away from the hope of, home; the coming up to this pitiless town; the eightpence a day earned among the foul-mouthed, foul-acting sempstresses; the patient endurance; its vanity;—all these, and more—far more—which the pen of the finest analyzer would fail to describe, he beheld before him in that cast-down, destitute girl. At last he broke in upon her weeping—

“Your mother——”

“Thank God! I have not one, since this has happened. Yet, had she been alive, this might not have occurred.”

“And your father? But no matter; I know sufficient. I will be your friend.”

She started up from where she sat, and threw herself at his feet; and as he raised her, she clung to him helplessly, still with tears, asking him what she should do—saying how she thanked him, and how grateful she would ever be, but that he must not inquire further. She had told him all she could tell; it was all true, though she could not ask him to believe her. He understood enough, and must put no more questions to her. She could not answer them.

“Only one thing; by what name shall I call you? I have no desire to know your real one.”

"You had better consider me as Ada Bolton."

He thought it odd that she should cling to the name that never must be hers ; but he would do as she desired.

"Well—enough for to-night. Unfortunately, I leave England to-morrow."

Her whole expression instantly changed from hope to utter dependence and helplessness.

"Only for a few weeks ; but I will see you to-morrow before I leave. I am sorry that separation should be the second step in the history of our—our friendship ; but you shall be cared for. Where are you living ?"

"In a street called Augustus Street, Cumberland Market. Do you know it ? Could you come there ?"

"Yes, I will come a little before ten, if

that is not too early. I don't know the street, but I will find it."

Her expressions of gratitude were like her story, and her tears; wild, fervid, and pitiful to witness.

"Yes—yes—good—night. Stay, I will see you out."

He walked with her into Fleet Street, and hailed a cab. She said she could walk, though it was true she would have difficulty in making her way. Yet she had no money.

"Never mind that; I will pay the man. Get in."

He gave the directions, and paid the fare.

"You had better pull up the window; it is cold to-night."

She was doing as he had suggested. Just before it was quite drawn up, he said—

"See!" and flung something in. It was

a banknote. She would have restored it, but the Temple gates had just closed upon the retreating figure of her solemn benefactor.

CHAPTER V.

“My eyes are full of tears; my heart, of woe :
My heart is heavy, and my eyes are dim—
And I am all aweary of my life.”

TENNYSON'S *Ænone*.

“Once more upon the waters.”

Childe Harold.

AFTER some little difficulty, Edgar found out the object of the following morning's first search, Augustus Street, Cumberland Market. He had never been in its neighbourhood before, and he was struck with its strange dissimilarity to what he had hitherto been accustomed to know of this pretentious

London. Its long rows of narrow houses, consisting but of a ground floor and one storey, reminded him of the worst parts of dull provincial towns. He enquired for Miss Bolton; he could not bring himself to think of that little creature in any other capacity. More than ever, this morning, was he forced to confess, that he had never gazed on a face so delicate. Her complexion was of that persistent pallor, that even tears, and the sad excitement of the bitterest grief, failed to flush; the blush of fear or shame alone would avail to suffuse it. Every movement was instinctively graceful; not from the promptings of a well-acquired art, but from the impulse of uninterfered-with nature. How small she was! What was she doing there—that timid, half-shrinking, half-suppliant girl? Edgar could hardly believe in the reality of the scene before him.

The room was about nine feet by seven ; it ought to have been a cupboard. It contained a horse-hair sofa, which almost filled up the entire space, yet which forbade all but the most adventurous from sitting down on it, for it was as prickly as the “fretful porcupine :” a table, that I should not have liked to play chess upon ; I certainly should have upset the whole concern : two chairs, one actually an arm-chair, if the possession of one remaining arm (the other being lost in the many vicissitudes of life to which some chairs are unfairly subjected) entitle it to the dignified appellation : a red hassock, with the straw peeping through the chinks of its long dreary confinement : a portrait of “the finest gentleman in Europe ;” and, by way of luxury and adornment, a couple of shells, that must have been cast up on to the mantel-piece by the flood in Noah’s

time. Such was the furniture. I have not forgotten the carpet, inasmuch as there was not one of any kind.

"You have chosen a quiet part of this noisy London," said Edgar. "I commend your taste."

"I cannot say what brought me here; there was certainly no choice. I walked through streets and streets knowing none of them, entering no house till I entered this: there was a card with 'lodgings' written on it."

"You have not been in London before, then?"

"Yes, once: but not since I was a child."
(How long ago, pray, was that, Edgar thought. She must mean her baby-hood.)
"I had scarcely ever been from home before—before—before *then*."

"What do you intend doing here?"

"I don't know," was the simple answer.

He was going to ask a question, but remembered her injunction of last night, and was silent. Besides, apart from this, he did not like to allude to what was passing in his mind; he might lose her confidence at the very outset. Moreover, her reply disarmed him. It was evident enough she did not know what she was going to do; therefore not what he trembled to think of. As he walked up and down the narrow room, her eyes followed him dependently, as though he were the *Deus ex machina* come to unravel the tragic plot, relieve her, and make her happy. What was she doing last night, Edgar asked himself? Something answered, starving! He turned abruptly upon her.

"My dear child! you *must* go home."

"Oh, no, no!—not home; not home; anything but that—not home—no, no;" and

she fell on her knees, and wrung her hands, and wept, and implored. Was this all he could do for her?—then let him leave her. She could not go back; she would rather die. She wished she could die; life was unbearable. And in her blind agony, not in blasphemous ingratitude, she begged God to take her out of the world. Edgar, charitable as he was, believing her story implicitly as far as it went, could not rid himself of uncomfortable suspicions. Had she after that fatal error (but error only) fallen into more than error—into sin; sin induced by desperation, by want, by pitiless circumstance, but still sin? Did conscience forbid her return home? And yet that slight, shrinking form was to all judgment only that of the duped, betrayed, cast-off, agonized innocent; not a fallen angel; but a suffering saint. He argued, he implored, he

used all his eloquence, his winning voice, his hitherto resistless manner, his most soothing fondlings—and uselessly. She too argued, she too implored, but, he thought, with half her case kept back. She too used her sweet voice, her gentle manner, her magic power of resistance. He found he had no present chance of success. Most men would, I think, have left her to her obstinacy. Was he to accept a responsibility, a fearful responsibility, the consequences of which it was impossible to foresee? Yes; he would accept it, for God would surely help him. And yet, at present, he could suggest nothing: she could suggest nothing. Gazing at her as she brushed away her tears, he fell into an odd day-dream.

What a mere child she was! He had better take her to Garden Court, and place her on a hassock, and give her “Mother

Goose" to read, and tell her to be very quiet, as he wanted to write; and when anybody came in, he could say, "Never mind the child; you may talk away. Don't go, Ada." And when the day's work was over, he would play with her, take her upon his knee, and let her curl his hair, whilst he told her the story of "Little Red Riding Hood;" and, as a matter of course, she would ask him to tell it again—"More, more; just once more." This is—can you understand it?—exactly what he felt as he looked at her. What were those tears about? O, she had broken some toy or other, and was in disgrace. And then suddenly rushed across him the remembrance of her fearful fate. *She*, a child! She that had gone through it all; ay, wrong, injustice, brutal falsehood, accursed spoliation; that had been trodden on, cast off, ruined, perhaps—how

was he to tell?—still more sadly, by the yielding of her own despair!

He paced the little room in a fever of anxiety. What was to be done, must be done soon; for he must leave her, and shortly—but surely not without some comfort, some defence. As she again followed him with her eyes, *she* seemed to doubt not; he had inspired her already with perfect confidence.

“Well, if you won’t go home, you must do something,” he said rather harshly.

“Oh, yes, sir! anything—anything you propose.”

Many plans had passed through his mind in that short period of deliberation. But he was chiefly thinking what she was NOT to do. His experience of London had told him that she must work alone. Alone! Hard word, doubtless; but necessary.

Better do anything, however hard, than be doing wrong. The sterner the discipline, the safer would she be. He was not thinking how she should maintain herself, he knew pretty well how that would be: he would have to see to that, and would see to it cheerfully. His heart yearned towards the poor, delicate creature—it felt very softly, indeed, in her regard; but his resolves were firm enough.

“Did you make any—a—acquaintances, any friends amongst those with whom—you said you—you worked?”

“Oh, no, no!” she answered impetuously, and hiding her face; “indeed, no; God forbid! But, sir, I pray you, do not, do not question me.”

“Well, well, I would only guard you. If you can live alone, all the better. You say you will work.”

“Work? O yes, in any way you require. But I am sure I shall not work, for I shall not live, long.”

“You must not talk in that manner. Show me your handwriting. Well, copy out, as often as you can, what I send you.” He was thinking of one of his college manuscripts; an utterly useless one, save for the purpose to which he now would put it. “And I will send you some books to read.”

She was thanking him for his parting act of last night.

“Never mind that; remain here where you are; your rooms will be made more comfortable, and you will have nothing to pay: I will arrange all that. Nay, you need not be so grateful. I shall expect you to write for me with great perseverance; so you will be doing something for me. If there is anything else that you require, ask

me for it now. There is nothing? Very well. I shall write to you soon, and shall expect a frank letter in reply. If, when I return, you propose no plan of your own, I shall expect you to follow mine. And now, good-bye."

These words so cold, so constrained, seemed to her as the kindest ray from Heaven. How she thanked him ! He spoke thus gravely, thus sternly, for his whole soul was melting towards her. He could have taken her and led her away, and made her happy ; but it would not do. As she tried to kiss his hand, failing to find words, he had great difficulty in remembering not to stroke her beautiful brown hair, and instinctively press her to his heart. He simply muttered—

"God protect you !"

And he was gone.

He meditated as he walked along on what

he had just seen and heard. This girl spoke well; but many stranded sinners do that. Who was she? Likely enough a well-to-do agriculturalist's daughter. She had probably been a sort of pet at home, and done nothing all her short life: you do see such girls sometimes wonderfully above their birth and station. Besides, these women—meaning women generally—these women are so desperately refined all the world over. Her father and brothers, if she had any, were probably little better than mere country louts. She had, it was plain, not mixed in society, as the saying is—but was perhaps imaginative, and might have read considerably: and both these are very refining. However, it did not matter who she was; why indulge a mere vulgar curiosity?

But he went on troubling himself with more serious thoughts than these. And was

H 2

it a marvel? A girl—nay, a child—beautiful, betrayed; perhaps, later on, false to herself—desperate, hopeless, alone—aye, alone! in London—no one to guard, comfort, watch over, sustain her! If time did not utterly undo her, God was strangely, miraculously merciful in her behoof. He stopped. He would go back and have it all out; he would ask her, he would tell her that she *must* give him her whole history after her arrival in London, the period upon which she had ceased to be frank; and why she could not return to her home. He must know if she were only wronged; or wronged and then fallen! Yes, he would go back. Then something whispered him—"Trust the child!" And he walked on.

.
.

Edgar was sitting with Horace Cooper in

one of the rooms of the "Lord Warden" hotel at Dover. He could hear the breaking of the waves on the beach below, the sailors calling across the harbour, and the swinging of the bells as boats arrived or went out. Every now and then he was distracted by lugubrious moanings from his companion.

"What is it, Horace?" he asked.

"O!" he said, as a child would have said it; "I don't want to go."

"Not to go! My dear fellow! you must. I am sure it will do you all the good in the world."

"I wish, indeed I wish you would let me return to London; I am miserable here; I am miserable anywhere; but I am best in London."

Edgar was silent. Cooper rose and came up to him.

"Do let me go back!" he pleaded, as

though he had no right so to do without his companion's leave. "I cannot bear this ; those waves torment me. I shall see new faces. Oh, do let me go back !"

"Wait till the morning, Horace, and then do you as will."

Morning came ; and Cooper pleaded more earnestly than ever to be allowed to go back to the great city. Edgar saw him off to London, and then took his own passage alone !

CHAPTER VI.

“ Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again.”

Childe Harold.

“ O, let not the soul that suffers dare to look Nature in the face, where she sits majestically aloft in the solitude of the mountains; for her face is hard and stern, and turns not with compassion upon her weak and erring child.”—LONGFELLOW'S *Hyperion*.

EDGAR leaned over the vessel, gazing upon the waters which, at every stride, grew more and more upheaving. It soothed him, though, to have the spray upon his face; the very tumult out-raged the restlessness at his heart, and taught him to be more at peace. He forgot, in their unceasing swell, the

ripples of sorrow still breaking on his soul. The listless wailing of his constant grief was hushed in the deep thunder-moan of the everlasting main. Its pain reached back beyond the pain of man; its woe would survive time: its life, mortality!

And now, like it, he was alone. He went his way without companionship; no one to comfort, no one to lean on him. He must speak to his own heart; find solace, should he need it, there—only there. No sweet lips to lisp encouragement; no strong hand to proffer stay; no ever-divining love to point out hope, and show and smooth the track. And the waters answered him: “Who comforts *us*? Who soothes our sorrows?”

And even they were left behind: and he was in the crowd, and not comforted. He stayed to hear the rattle of the dice at Baden. But there was a something in the

atmosphere that jarred with his ideas : surely he was not seeking to barter grief for ungodliness. He thought he had, at last, come upon the resting-place ; the long-sought hostel, " the baiting-place of woe," as Ben Jonson says, when he reached Ems. So he put his pack down, and sat by its lintels. It answered well enough at first ; but a sort of destiny—let us honestly call it Providence—seemed to drive him on. For one evening an Englishman, who, with the prejudice of his race, considered that in living long he must necessarily have become very wise, got into conversation with our hero, and took occasion to speculate upon his gloominess. And as our countrymen, when not sullenly silent, are often too frank and familiar, this good traveller took for granted that the young man was in love, and read him incontinently a lecture upon his folly. He had gone

through all that sort of thing, and knew it well; and he had quite made up his mind that all the women in the world were not worth the end of his cigar. "No, sir; not the butt-end of this very good cigar. Take my advice, and forget this juvenile folly. After having wasted the most enjoyable portion of your life in regretting the girl, you will spend the remainder in laughing at yourself. Believe me, young man, you will save much time, much trouble, and I daresay some money—no contemptible thing, let me tell you—in losing her, and regaining your senses."

I wonder how much good philosophers have done in this world since it began. At the day of judgment, next to ascertaining my own and my hero's fate, I shall make this inquiry; and I have a strong suspicion that their balance-sheet will not be a very

favourable one. A set of stupid egotists, all of them ! Conscience mine ! There are a million, ay, ten hundred million, women, any one of whom has done more, with a simple pressure of the hand, or a momentary look from her melting eyes, than all these lecturing sages put together. However, 'tis not my affair. No one ever gives me advice. I am not the one to listen to it.

Edgar did not answer the, perhaps, good-natured, but certainly troublesome, and one would think rather intrusive and impertinent, old gentleman. He was not going to argue the matter with anybody ; nay, he was not going so much as to acknowledge it. But, somehow, the next day he did not like Ems, so he left it.

He had had enough of the crowd : he would try the mountains. A month had elapsed, and he was in the Tyrol, and pedes-

trianising. He felt more woebegone than ever; but he thought it was only the same old feeling, not yet quite broken in to the new scene. For hours would he sit, simply wondering why he suffered so. Time was when he had thought himself a very brave fellow; he certainly never fancied falling so low as this. He composed many a mountain lyric, all with the same burthen; and they died, like echoes only, along the hills. He was not one who would ever have sung his real sorrows to the world, but he did not mind telling them to the mountains. They passed the tale along, with a continuous groan of grief, and then they folded it in their breasts, and never reuttered it. They had nothing wherewith to answer him. They did not know him as the Afrel hills had known him. They seemed to ask each other what this stranger wanted with them, and

why he had come so far, and across the sea, to make a home with them ; and he saw that they regarded him as an alien, and wished that he would depart. He had not been so kindly welcomed, or so gently dealt with, as to wish particularly to stay. Whither now, O wandering one ? Contrast may, haply, strengthen and restore. He appeared to fancy so, for the close of September saw him in Paris.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Resembling her, yet not the same.”

The Giaour.

“ Still must I on.”—*Childe Harold.*

EDGAR was standing, one morning shortly after his arrival in Paris, on one of the many bridges which traverse the Seine. He was not meditating, it would have seemed, upon anything in particular ; he had just come from a visit to the chapel of Notre Dame. A woman who came along the bridge appeared much attracted, for some reason or other, by his appearance,

and eyed him closely. She passed him, turned, looked at him again, and said, suddenly and surprisedly—

“ Oh, sir! are you here ?”

She was dressed in the shabbiest and most threadbare garments. Her air was that of one haggard, anxious, and friendless. Edgar remembered having seen the face, and that was all. It was a handsome one, or had at least once been such, and still bore the print and recollection of not having been handsome in vain.

“ You don’t remember me ? Well, it does not signify.” She spoke in English. “ I will go my way.”

The voice, the peculiarity of words, the recklessness of manner, recalled to his mind the figure he had once seen huddled up on the steps of the house in Pall Mall where Cooper was lying prostrate. It was she who

had caused, and, it now seemed, had suffered, so much misery. It was Emma. When he had seen her before, she had worn the raiment, even if tarnished and neglected, of luxury and sin; she now wore those which bespoke but poverty and dejection.

“No, no—I know you—I remember you now,” said Edgar, hastily. “What brings you to Paris?”

“The same thing that has led me to many strange places since you saw me last. Can you ask? I have but one object now; one thing only do I seek—to make him and her again happy whom I have made so miserable. How is he? Have you seen him lately?”

“Not very long since; he is much the same.” Edgar knew well that she spoke of Cooper. “I wanted him to come with me; but he would not. But what do you mean

that you are doing, in order to restore him to—to—her, I suppose.”

“ Yes, yes. Why, I am seeking her—have been seeking her for months. I never saw her but once, and that but for a second ; *that* day—he has told you, surely ?”

“ Yes,” said Edgar, “ all.”

“ *That* day when I caught a glimpse of her form at the window of their house, and didn’t know who it was. But I knew her again.”

“ Knew her again ! What mean you ? You have not seen her ?”

“ I think so—at last.”

Edgar started. Found Mary Linwood !

“ I have been in a good many places,” Emma continued, “ and in this city more than once before. I have ——”

“ But,” interrupted Edgar, “ have you spoken to her ?”

“Not yet; but I intend to do. Though it's not like her in face, it must be her. She had light hair—now hers is a deal darker than mine; but it's the same figure, the same motion like—it's her—I'm sure it's her—but I'll try her to-night.”

“How to-night? Where do you see her? Can I accompany you?”

“Does she know you?”

“No; she never saw me, nor I her.”

“Well, you may come, if you can be on this bridge at ten o'clock.”

“Certainly I will be, and most punctually.”

“I hope it's her. I've done nothing these six months but try to find her. I am not what I was. I have wandered, and I have starved, and I have been ill—but I haven't done wrong; and, if it please God, will do it no more. But it'll be hard if it

isn't her. I've worked, and I've walked, and I've starved, and I've sought her ; and that's all."

"Yes, I can see you have had a miserable time of it—you are strangely altered ; but don't refuse the means that may help you. It's no use starving. My object is the same as yours ; so take what is of no use to me." Ho offered her money, which she at last accepted with great reluctance. "Be punctual, I will be here at ten precisely."

They parted. Edgar went up the Champs Elysées, and on into the Bois de Boulogne, which was then beginning to give promise of what it has since become. Was it possible, he thought, that he was this night to see Mary Linwood—to see her whose single word could even now perhaps restore more broken hearts than one ? Why, if she desired concealment, had she sought the

publicity of the most visited of cities? But then from what Emma said, if it was her, she was carefully disguised. What had she been doing all these months—nearly eighteen months, was it not?—since the fatal day? Had she lived alone? Nay, why ask? Six or seven hours more, and he might know all. And yet he would have asked himself many more questions, and was just suggesting one still more insoluble than any which had preceded it, when it seemed to him that a young lady, though without speaking, was bending down to him from her saddle, and offering her hand. He looked up hurriedly, and, to his amaze, encountered the blue eyes of Florence Laughnan.

“So you refuse to know me?” she said, archly; “I thought we were always to remember each other.”

“Surely ; but I also thought we were not to meet again for two years. We are more fortunate. But had we not met for more than two years, I should not have forgotten you. But I was in a reverie, and expected you, most unreasonably, to be a totally different person.”

“So you acknowledge that you were not thinking of me ? Well—I forgive you. Papa would come here ; it was this autumn’s fancy, and you know he was not likely to meet with much opposition from me on the subject. We left the juniors at home. We are only papa, mamma, myself, and my cousin. Allow me to introduce him. Arthur ! Pardon me. I have to call him “Monsieur” on these occasions, and ’tis difficult. *Mr. Arthur Laughnan—Mr. Huntingdon.*”

He was a handsome English lad, of about sixteen, perhaps seventeen. His fair hair

curled luxuriantly : his eyes were a joyous blue : his carriage, at least on horseback, already struck Edgar as possessing rare grace. There was nothing *gauche* about him : he had none of a boy's awkwardness, except that he blushed not unfrequently, especially when his pretty cousin quizzed him, which she did pretty often.

"And how long have you been in Paris ? We came only last Wednesday."

"A fortnight to-morrow," said Edgar ; "but I had been nearly everywhere before I landed here. I have been at the Spas in Germany, and patrolling the Tyrol."

"Are you better ?" asked Florence, stooping down, and speaking in a low tone.

"Do I look so ?" he inquired significantly ; "facts have not changed."

"*Petit peu*, as they say here. Just a shadow of improvement."

The cousin dropped behind.

“My dear Arthur, we are not plotting revolutions; you may really hear all that we have to say; I was only making humdrum inquiries about health. I assure you, Mr. Huntingdon, that Arthur is so very delicately organized, that if I spoke to a groom in a tone he could not over-hear, he would fancy I was making the man a repository of some terrific secret, and would canter off.”

The boy blushed and rejoined them.

“O Florence! how you do exaggerate! Don’t you think, sir, there are times when you do not wish everybody present to join in the conversation. When a third person is *de trop*?”

Edgar thought—How like a schoolboy.

“Certainly,” he said, “but this is not one of them; let me assure you.”

“There, sir! are you satisfied. I will pardon you this time on account of your attempt at a French phrase. And I trust that you will be quite satisfied with having been offended—no, hurt, that is the word—ten times in one ride, and not cut me again THIS afternoon.”

Again he blushed. How is it that boys nearly always fall in love, the first time, with their seniors and their betters? The later teens are an aspiring time; the period when the amatory teeth are cut, and the patient (impatient indeed) frets under it, and kicks, and cries, and cuffs, and manages to be very disagreeable to strangers. I think there ought to be a nursery for lads as for babies. It is an intolerable age, surely, when conceit begins first to make a glorious show. To such youngsters the world seems a mass of selfish, deceitful

humbugs; they have no patience with it. It has but one goddess, and that one, generally, as I say, too old and altogether unpropitious. And this mends not Lorenzo's humour at all. He gets over it, grows out of it, and is a solid pig-headed old gentleman some day. And so it seemed that Arthur Laughnan regarded Florence as the one fair thing in the whole diseased universe; and that Florence was well aware of it, and teased, and by no means returned the worship of her amorous young cousin. I think she was too unmerciful to him, though the provocation was not slight.. As Miss Laughnan not unnaturally cast many anxious glances towards the sorrow-stamped face of our hero, Arthur's eyes constantly followed hers, and did not seem over-well satisfied with the pursuit. The conversation was scarcely so animated, or so romantic, as

had been that one in the midst of the warm and fragrant hay, one afternoon last July. Florence said they were living in the Champs Elysées, and asked Edgar to call. This, he said, he would do the following day, and with this promise he left Arthur to the again undivided possession of his cousin's sweet society.

When, punctual to his engagement, Edgar arrived at ten o'clock, at the spot where in the morning he had met Emma, he found her awaiting him. "Let us go at once," she said; "it's a sort of gambling-house; it's not far. We are not sure to see her to-night; it's all a chance."

The room into which Emma led was almost noiseless. A shrug of the shoulders and an occasional and half-suppressed oath were the only signs of either the actors or the spectators being interested.

“She’s not here to-night. Be patient; we had better separate.”

At the end of half-an-hour or so, Emma approached him.

“It’s after her time. She won’t come to-night; she doesn’t come every night; we’d better go.”

“Nay; wait a little.”

The words were hardly spoken, when Emma touched his arm and fell behind him, whispering hastily,

“See!”

He had never seen Mary Linwood, it is true, but Cooper had more than once, in the wooing days, described her to him. Certainly, the lady who had just entered did not bear out the description. As Emma had said, Mary Linwood was a blonde. The new-comer was dark in complexion, and her hair was jet black; that was evident, even

through a thick veil. Her whole appearance was Spanish. She walked to a seat, which she took as if hers by right. Everybody moved for her, no one addressed her. *She* noticed no one.

“Go and stake,” whispered Emma, returning to his side; “but do not speak to me again.”

Edgar went to the table and put down his stakes. In less than a quarter of an hour the lady rose to go.

“Strange woman!” muttered one.

“Exactly her sum.”

“Yes; always goes, when it is won or lost.”

And again everybody was silent. Edgar had not liked to rise immediately upon her doing so. On looking round the room, he perceived that Emma too had gone. He descended the stairs; he found Emma lean-

ing against the outer door. "It isn't she, after all."

"How do you know?"

"I spoke to her, and asked alms in his name. She evidently did not understand me. She listened calmly, shrugged her shoulders, speaking in some foreign language, and dropping this money into my hand, which I held out. It's gold, you see. She went away quite slowly. See; that's her, going down the street."

"And what shall you do now?" Edgar asked.

"Go on seeking; there's nothing else for it."

"But you must take more care of yourself; you look fearfully ill; you will be no longer able to go on seeking if you treat yourself as I think you must have done. Where are you staying?"

“In the Rue Laroche.” She described the neighbourhood ; it was somewhere in the Quartier Latin. Some hovel, doubtless. “You wouldn’t find it: No. 17 it is.”

“Well, now, do not be obstinate. Send to me if you want me, and promise you will see me again before you leave Paris.” He gave her his address ; and she turned, as it seemed, unconcernedly away.

Well, well. Let the upright world, that never errs, shake its shocked head, and go its way too. I know very little of this woman’s past ; I daresay ’twas bad enough. I know it was not what it should have been. But while heaven opens its gates to penitent sinners, I cannot understand why earth should be so strangely illiberal. Out on penitence ! says respectability. Or, at any rate, we would see the penitence as little as we wish to see the sin. Well, I for one am

so edified with the reparation, that in it I forget all the rest. And you, gentle reader ! surely you will not underrate the devotion, the self-abnegation, of this persistent wanderer, because she was a sinner once ? Oh ! if all sinners would go and do likewise !

CHAPTER VIII.

“Once more who would not be a boy?”

Childe Harold.

MR. LAUGHNAN evidently carried with him his country tastes into the city. And that taste Edgar thought, as the following morning he made his promised visit, must indeed be a decided and predominant one, that insisted upon having, during a sojourn that was to be but brief, a house in the Champs Elysées, with a conservatory and garden attached to it. Some of our countrymen—nay, I think, many—sooner than be baulked

of their habits, would never travel at all. Mr. Laughnan welcomed Edgar warmly.

"Florence gave us," he said, "a long account of her first meeting with you. It was a little romantic, Mr. Huntingdon! a little romantic; almost a leaf from the Pastorals. I think she did nothing for a month but talk of it!"

"And then forgot it."

"Indeed I did not."

Arthur moved discontentedly in his chair, accompanying the gesture with a grunt of considerable disdain, which elicited from his anxious aunt, with whom the handsome lad was a great favourite, the kindest inquiries.

"Indeed I did not," continued Florence, "but you must know that I got innumerable scoldings all about that innocent poetry. Mamma has never forgiven me. I don't

really remember what I was, and what I was not, at the time—everything horrible!”

“My dear!” said Mrs. Laughnan, wishing to excuse herself; “I am sure Mr. Huntingdon knows how requisite it is, at times, to check the tendency of young girls to an excessive buoyancy of spirits; and Florence really does such very strange things that I am often afraid of people drawing ungenerous conclusions. But it is only thoughtlessness.”

This was evidently a standing rebuke, which the mother thought it her duty to administer periodically to her daughter.

“It was a thoughtlessness of which I cannot complain,” said Edgar; “I can assure you that Miss Laughnan was only doing the kind offices of a Samaritan; for, seriously speaking, I might have fainted by the way.”

“Of course. O that unfortunate glass of milk! You know not what that glass of milk has cost me.”

“And the poem!” put in Arthur, in a would-be satirical strain.

“Well, my dear boy!” said his cousin laughingly, “when you can write a poem, or even twenty lines towards one, I will promise to sit two hours with you in a hayfield, and listen to it.”

Arthur could not withstand her quizzing; and he saw she was making fun of him. He blushed and walked to the window, which stood open.

“Do you ride?” Florence asked.

“Oh, yes! I had a gallop in the Bois this morning. But these Paris horses are such animals; I doubt if they have any real paces.”

“I think that is the best part of it. They

are like everything here: such a delightful change from the monotony of home!"

"Florence has a contempt for home," Mrs. Laughnan remarked seriously.

"No, mamma! not in the least: what a character you give me! It will be a better place than Paris when I have been here two months."

"Which you never will have been," said her father, who began to wish he were by his own fireside again.

"I suppose not. I dislike the sameness of one spot eternally."

"That constant love of change shows a frivolous mind, my dear!"

Poor Florence! She was one of those much to be commiserated girls who are always lectured in company. Mothers *will* do such stupid things. Edgar came to the rescue.

“Do you not think that it may show the restlessness of talent, longing for scenes to satisfy its capacity?”

Arthur, who was standing at the window, and beating time impatiently with his foot, turned round and exclaimed, half audibly—

“What —” and checked himself. His aunt renewed her inquiries. Florence, who knew that the young gentleman was in a pet, answered for him—

“Oh, he is only keeping time to the soldiers; they are constantly passing, Mr. Huntingdon. If he is a very good boy, I will buy him a drum.”

“Bah! I mean—I did *not* mean that.”

“Oh, indeed! How absent he is! He must be beginning to compose his poem. Do let us know when it is completed.”

Edgar took compassion on the poor victim of the pretty cousin's wickedness, and asked

if he might have a ride in the Bois that evening with Florence and her papa.

“Arthur will go with you, Mr. Huntingdon, if you will excuse me.”

“I am engaged,” answered the lad, still leaning out of the window. Then, suddenly, “Oh, what a beautiful girl!” He thought, in his simple heart, to make Florence jealous.

“Are you going to ride with *her*?”

“My dear!” again exclaimed Mrs. Laughnan. Florence raised her hand deprecatingly, and went on—

“After all, now that Mr. Huntingdon is in Paris, Arthur is no use. Let me see—when do the vacations end?”

“Don’t be absurd, Florence!” and her cousin came towards her. “You know I have no engagement,”—he had repented—“and shall be glad to ride with you.”

“Very well ; as Monsieur pleases. Do you know, mamma, we shall not require a groom, as Arthur always modestly drops behind.”

Edgar laughed and rose to go, asking Arthur to accompany him. The boy assented, but with little graciousness. When they got into the street, Edgar offered his arm, which was politely but coldly declined. After they had walked some distance, during which the conversation was of the most constrained nature, Arthur said abruptly—

“What do you think of my cousin, Mr. Huntingdon?”

“That she is a very charming girl.”

“She seems very fond of you.”

“Does she? I am very fond of her : she is such a pleasant companion.” He did not exactly know what he was saying, and was

beginning to wish he were alone. "We should soon be great friends."

"Is that all? I thought you cared more for her than that." And the boy seemed considerably relieved. He suddenly changed from the jealous to the confidential tone, to Edgar's infinite amusement: "*I* am very fond of her, too. I wish she would not plague me so. Don't tell anybody, particularly my aunt."

"Certainly not."

"Do you think she cares for me?"

"In what way?"

"Why, I don't exactly know; but the fact is, I am very—I am—in love with her."

Edgar was thinking to himself: "How natural!" Unfortunately, he said it aloud.

"Why natural?"

"Oh, because she is such a delightful

girl, and I suppose you are constantly with her."

Not very long ago, Edgar had been a mere boy himself; and, though he was amused, he sympathized with Arthur's simple avowal and still simpler cross-questioning. O golden age! the true *Saturnia regna*! before we learn to put our dearest thoughts and fondest yearnings under watch; when we frankly take the first heart heaven sends, and pour into it our untutored tale of love. Sad change indeed! when comes the iron Time, and we look askance at every idle passer-by, as though he were our very worst enemy; when we breathe our affection only to dying embers, and dark-foliaged trees, in the sombre midnight; when we wake like misers, and get up stealthily and have a look at our treasure where it lies unshared, unblest, and rots. "Il y a un enseignement,"

says Lamartine, "pour celui qui comprend, dans la vie de chacun. . . Le dédain n'est qu'une ignorance." And what is there ridiculous in manly simplicity? The world thinks differently; so I had, perhaps, better utter no more heresies. Yet, one word more: I look back to the affections of boyhood, and find that I have felt none since more worthy the shrine of reverent memory.

"Then, why don't *you* love her?"

"In the first place," Edgar answered, with a smile which he found it impossible to conceal, "I am not much in her society."

"But if you were, do you think you ever would love her?"

"Well, I think not. I leave Florence to you. I will make you my confidant—I am already engaged."

How Arthur's eyes brightened—and for more reasons than one ! He was intensely flattered that Mr. Huntingdon should confide in him.

“ May I take your arm now ? ”

Edgar laughed as he gave it, and said—

“ Then we are to be friends ? ”

“ I should like,” was the frank reply ; “ but, tell me, what can I do to make Florence care more for me ? She is so fond of poetry ; and what I write she says is so wretchedly poor : and I believe it is. I spent two hours yesterday, and wrote only twelve lines, and I burned them. One wasn't a proper rhyme, and I couldn't find another.”

“ But you need not compose : you should read to her.”

“ But she says that I read poetry so badly.”

“Does she ? Then read prose.”

Edgar was talking rather absurdly ; but, how otherwise could he have answered ? He knew well enough that Florence Laughnan was not at all likely to be much moved by the very best incense which this young worshipper could beg, borrow, or steal ; and, doubtless, Master Arthur was as conceited as was well possible, to fancy that he had any right to swing his thurible in her presence at all. Some honest people would have said, you young fool ! you have no more chance of bearing away your clever, pretty cousin’s heart, than the frog in the fable had of blowing himself out to the size of the unconcerned bull. You are a mere unfledged schoolboy, with aspirations considerably beyond your capabilities, and infinitely more conceit than merit. Make sonnets, if you must be at such a stupid

occupation as that of rhyme-tagging, to the moon. You will never know whether your admiration is accepted or not ; though, could the truth be known, no doubt she laughs at you as much as the flesh-and-blood object of your useless vow. So some persons would have answered ; and they would have answered no less truly than foolishly and cruelly. We do not cut off the blossoms of a young sapling in its first years, simply because we know they will never come to anything—never bear luscious fruit. Let us act naturally, then, as my hero did. He looked at the blossoms, and saw that they were very pretty, and admired them, and would try to turn the sun upon them. It is not in one's teens that the heart breaks irretrievably, all of a love passage.

“Do you think,” continued Arthur —
“No, never mind.”

"Tell me—what is it?"

"I would rather not."

"Certainly; as you like."

"Well, I will mention it; but, tell me honestly what you think. Do you think you could write something for me which she would not know to be yours?"

"I dare say I could, and will do so."

"Will you? Oh, you are such a kind fellow. You mustn't mind the rude things I said at the window. I was so mad. I hope you won't think anything more of them. I wish Florence would not quiz me so."

"You must not give her so many opportunities. You are so jealous, and she sees it, and takes advantage of it."

"But, then, I am only a boy." He glanced at Edgar, who could but answer—

"We are all boys, some time or other—must be, you know."

There was not much consolation in this, certainly.

"I wish I was older. And then, she likes clever people ; and I fear I'm not clever, nor ever shall be. But I'm fifth in my form. It's not very low, is it ?"

"Not at all."

"When will you give me the verses ?"

"This evening, perhaps."

"Oh, thank you. Mind you don't let Florence see it."

They separated at the Place de la Concorde. Arthur went his way, thinking what a stunning fellow Huntingdon was : so free, so easy, so kind. But, why the deuce was he so quiet ? He wished evening would come. He wondered if the verses would be good ones. There was no rhyme for Florence, was there ? However, if there were, Huntingdon would be sure to find it.

Edgar walked on, at first thinking of the eager boy who had just quitted his side, but soon falling into the usual strain, the every-day meditation: He had wandered, he knew not whither. Children were asking him to buy some half-faded flowers from their little altars, that they might be able, they frankly owned, to buy fresh ones for the same pious purpose. Escaping from one difficulty he only encountered another. He had rid himself of an infinite number of centimes: he now found himself laden with an infinite number of drooping flowers. The children, though somewhat consoled by his bounty, seemed not quite pleased with his leaving his purchases behind him, but told him, eagerly, that the church, on the outside of which they had erected their altars, was the Church of Saint Germain-aux-Près. It has, since the period of this visit, been redeco-

rated in the florid style which is now so prevalent in Paris. Beyond one or two old pictures, it contained little deserving great attention. Edgar was about to regain the street, when he perceived, kneeling in earnest prayer, before the statue of some saint, the figure and dress of the lady whom he had seen at the gambling-house, and whom Emma had supposed to be Mary Linwood. He screened himself behind one of the massive pillars. Her eyes were suffused with tears; her hands were clasped; her soul seemed predominant, and in rapt communion with holy things. Shortly, she went to the statue, placed something upon the pedestal, and departed. As Edgar passed the statue, he could read plainly, on a slip of paper, the words—written in French—“What I won last night.” He had himself been three or four times, out of simple curiosity, to the

house where he had first gone with Emma, and twice again had he seen this lady there. It seemed as though she played in order that she might win alms for the poor. Strange !

When Edgar emerged from the church, he found the lady besieged by the children, much as he had been. She bought some flowers ; stooped down to kiss the youngest of the group, and walked quietly away. After some more purposeless wandering, he discovered that this lady still walked in front of him. So far he had taken the same route purely by accident ; now—he could not tell why—he followed her intentionally. She entered a house in a small street, called the Rue Larray. He was just asking why on earth he had troubled himself to discover her residence, when there emerged from the house Gregson Woofinden !

“Comment ? We shall never meet like other people. There are not two other persons in the world who would have met in such an out-of-the-way place as this.”

“No, surely not,” said Edgar. “But why did you not let me know that you were here?”

“Why, my dear fellow, before I left town, I made every inquiry for your whereabouts. Only one person knew it, and he but vaguely. He said you were somewhere in the Tyrol. And lo ! you turn up in the Rue Larray !”

“The Rue Larray do you call it ? Do you know any one in that house ?”

“Which house ?”

“The one you came out of.”

“Oh, yes ; that I do. I shall astonish you, I think. Will you believe it ? I am actually doing something, and the strangest

something in the world. The lessee of our Opera in London is a friend of mine. I told him the other day that I was coming over here; and, purely in joke, offered to cater for the public, and engage any amount of prima-donnas for him. He took me at my word, and asked me to make terms with the star of one of the minor theatres here, Mademoiselle Ninon."

"I have heard her three or four times."

"Well, she lives there."

"Can you introduce me?"

"What! introduce you to a singer? Philip is no longer sober."

"Bah! 'tis my whim. But you know nothing against——"

"Not I. Only our poet was always so particular."

"And is yet. Well, you will introduce me—not to-day—to-morrow. I suppose

that was not she who entered just as you came out?"

"No; that is 'the dark lady.'"

"Do you know anything of *her*?"

"Nothing. Mademoiselle Ninon calls her always 'the dark lady,' and laughs. You want to know her—*that* brought you here."

"I shall not satisfy your curiosity. You know you can read my thoughts—read them now."

"I do read them. They are not very important. You are only thinking me a bore."

"As you will."

"But what of your poem?"

"It rusts."

"Lend it me."

"With pleasure. I do not forget your promise. I am staying here—come in. I will give you the manuscript, and do not

spare my poesy. You must not stay with me, though; I am in an unfortunate humour, and must sulk alone. Call when you will."

Woofinden left him.

He had been away from England now more than two months: how did he stand? Had he gained the object to attain which he had turned vagrant! No, no; sadly, but unmistakeably, no. Look at to-day. He was in one of his worst moods; and, do what he would, he could not shake it off. It was true that he had in the society of Florence Laughnan spent some happy hours; but beyond the immediate pleasure which they conferred, they did him no good—they left no sense of strength behind. Nay, he thought that they enervated him. He was sure at least of this, that if he did return to London now, it would not be to

work. And at this determination had he arrived : that go back he would not until he had forgotten to be an idler ; until—though love not destroyed—ambition overshadowed sorrow, and concealed regret !

He took up the newspaper. One of the first things he saw was that Lord Fairfort had been entertaining a large party at his country-seat ; one of the next, that Lord Fairfort's brother was dead. Doubtless, this was the silent old man whom he had met during that dear autumn visit, who had married out of his proper sphere, and upon whose wrongs Annette had been so indignantly eloquent that last afternoon walk. This set Edgar thinking again ; and not very cheerfully. Think on ! Well hast thou waited, patient poet ! Comfort is at hand.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Oh ! fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long—
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer—and be strong.”

LONGFELLOW.

MOVING in that class of society in which her profession necessarily placed her—a class amongst whom reputations are readily tarnished, and it must perhaps be owned, original goodness, however intense, is beset by every species of temptation—Mademoiselle Ninon had preserved both her virtue and her character without spot. Edgar had

been introduced, according to his desire, by Woofinden, who left Paris a few days after. It is difficult to assign very reasonable motives for this wish of our hero; they certainly were not very momentous ones. But I am of opinion that there are few people, whose experience has been of an average extent, who have not, more than once, felt and gratified an ill-defined curiosity in regard to some peculiarly-encountered stranger. And this was the case at present with Edgar. He had an objectless desire to know something about the lady of the gambling-house and the church of St. Germain-aux-Près. This desire, however, met with no attainment. Mademoiselle Ninon had no information to convey. When Edgar mentioned her, he would get for answer the gay outburst of—

“ Ah! I know nothing. She comes—she

goes—she is grave. See all. She asks how I am; I tell her I am well. I give her tickets for the Opera; she never goes. Oh, she is grave!”

In fact, there seemed nothing to discover. Edgar never saw her with anybody: often in the church of Saint Germain-aux-Près, sometimes in the Bois de Boulogne—always sedate and alone. What was there extraordinary in it? He used to meet her on the staircase of the house in the Rue Larray; he had totally abandoned all interest in her, and laughed at himself for his stupid curiosity; but he still continued his visits to Mademoiselle Ninon. Positively he thought this but indifferently-educated, however talented, young lady, was doing him more good than all his journeyings,—than Afrel, Betty Nestfield, King’s Bench Walk, Ems, the Tyrol, Florence Laughnan, put together.

She was the most sprightly creature he had ever met. She rallied him about his gravity; she told him queer stories about the green-room; in all of which the humourous element predominated. She had taken a fancy to the solemn young Englishman. Of course, he had said nothing to her of his misfortunes; but she could guess—what woman could not?—much of the cause of his sedate ways. And, moreover, she fancied that a bachelor who paid her so little attention (in the exceptional sense of the word) as he did, must surely have all his sweeter thoughts elsewhere; and for this she liked him all the more. It was something new to her to have the occasional society of one who never flattered, never wooed her, but who paid her that most delicate compliment that can possibly be paid to a woman—oh, that men would believe this!—the compliment of con-

versing with her rationally, and on terms of intellectual equality. She had many admirers, and a sad life she led them. They had not been accustomed to such a cold reception as that with which she encountered their homage. She cared for none of them as she cared for the new acquaintance, who, as she said, "Flatters me not, tells me nothing pretty, is melancholy, comes not very often, but is a true gentleman."

She used to cheer him, amuse him, and make him laugh at her droll gossip of the most gossiping city in the world. And so he continued to seek comfort for the present and strength for the future, even in the good-humoured rattle of a singer; returning at the same time, I believe, some of the pleasure, and, he trusted, of the good, which he received.

It was not long before this intimacy was

bruited among Ninon's admirers, and with particular interest among the visitors who had once or twice been refused admittance, and had discovered the reason of this denial. There were many—the mere hangers-on that ever attend one unfortunately situated as the actress was—who could not fail to be chagrined by this new announcement. But there was one, far more worthy than these sycophants, who had for nearly two years cherished for the young lady a sincere and honest devotion, and whose whole efforts were expended in persuading her to abandon her (as he called it) detestable profession, and be the ornament no longer of the stage, but of his domestic hearth. Monsieur Léon Chasseloup was in every particular a most finished Frenchman. He possessed, to a degree extraordinary even in his own country, an inordinate vanity, accompanied by a perhaps

•

rarer weakness, the most delicate generosity. That he had been put aside and altogether supplanted by a young fellow who never even appeared as a combatant on the legitimate *champ de bataille*, the side scenes of the theatre, was enough to excite envy and suggest a feeling not very removed from hate. But more than this. He had no reason to suppose that Edgar was anything more than one of the parasites who were constantly springing up, but a parasite favoured as no other had hitherto been. And so all his plans were being frustrated. He himself was not prospering in his suit; and a fresh difficulty had arisen—one which was likely to make Ninon cling more to her present occupation. Once, at the Opera, he had referred to his having been denied admittance, and hinted at the presence of her new and favoured visitor; but had received

•

for answer so haughty a silence that, ardent lover as he was, he at once perceived that the repetition of such remarks would only cause his complete ostracism.

.
.

Florence Laughnan was taking off the dead leaves in the conservatory, which stood at the extreme end of the drawing-room of the house in the Champs Elysées. The drawing-room door opened, and two visitors were admitted whose voices she thought she recognized; but with both of whom she was only slightly acquainted. The conservatory door was partly ajar; but from her position she could neither see nor be seen; and as her mamma was not on the spot to receive the visitors, she naturally objected to encounter unaided two gentlemen who were little more to her than complete strangers.

So she remained where she was, continuing to take off the dead leaves as quietly as possible. Fortunately the visitors seemed deeply interested in some previous conversation of their own, which they did not interrupt as they walked to the other end of the room. They spoke in French; and Florence did her best not to overhear their remarks. But, despite her endeavours, their conversation reached her; and amongst it, words which very soon transformed her from an unwilling, into a most eager listener.

“I wonder if this Huntingdon is a good shot?”

“You cannot mind that much, Chasseloup! Besides, if you like, you can drive him to challenge you, and so take your choice.”

“No! I shall challenge him—that is nothing. But how can you be certain he will be there to-night?”

“Ha! I did not tell you that: I shall make you grateful. It cost me five louis, with which I bribed the concierge who stopped this letter.” And he read it aloud:—

“DEAR NINON,

“I will be with you to-morrow night, after the Opera, as you desire. I hope you will have a great triumph on your benefit. I shall not accept the box; I shall take one. I shall be there with a very pretty young lady, a great friend of mine, and her family. I shall try to get you many plaudits.

“Yours sincerely,

“E. HUNTINGDON.”

“It was not well,” said Chasseloup, “to obtain that letter: it was not honourable.”

“Very well, as you will; I have done my best to help you. But——”

“Pardon me; I was ungrateful.” Jealousy, and the hope of a speedy satisfaction, overcame natural scruples. “I am very much obliged to you; you are of infinite service. But why must you go disguised? You say you don’t know this Huntingdon?”

“No—never saw him that I know of. But I would rather go so; it is safer.”

Mrs. Laughnan entered. The visit was like most visits—ceremonious. Florence did not come out of her hiding-place, but stood in a fever of alarm, cutting off no more dead leaves, and wondering when these visitors would leave, and fearing at every moment to be discovered. Heaven willed it otherwise.

No sooner was she liberated by their departure than she hurried to her writing-desk,

and commenced an evidently eager and—as she thought—important letter. When she had concluded it, she asked for a Directory. What address did she want? She would not say; she *would* have one secret. Who does not know of what use a Paris Directory is? Whatever address she required, she certainly did not find it. She was in a perfect fever, and evidently wanted something done which must be done privately. Oh, if Arthur were only at hand! Now, when his presence was really useful, he was elsewhere. Why had she been so stupid as to offend him that very morning? Why had she told him that she believed the verses which Edgar had written for him were Byron's—certainly not his? What servant could she trust? Mr. Laughnan wished to see her. Would she write some letters for him? That done, her mamma interfered. “My dear, you

must really go and dress: you will never be in time. We must not keep Mr. Huntingdon waiting after all his kindness. You know that he always likes to hear the overture."

At the appointed time, Florence came down stairs, flushed, excited, and unable to speak without the strangest hesitation. Edgar and Arthur arrived together. The latter, at his friend's suggestion, had bought a bouquet of the choicest flowers, which he now presented, with some diffidence, to his cousin. With what luxurious joy and pride beat the boy's heart, as Florence's eyes suddenly brightened up, and she clasped the bouquet with a rapturous pleasure and overwhelming thanks. Edgar could not think that Arthur's gift was the sole reason for this almost delirious delight, though he could divine no other. Mrs. Laughnan was accustomed to

what she considered her daughter's fickle levity, and so thought little of it.

The orchestra was playing the overture. Florence turned round to Edgar, and asked—

“Do you know where Mademoiselle Ninon lives?”

He thought it a strange question, but he answered, “Oh, yes; in the Rue Larray.”

“What a strange name!” It certainly was *not*. “Whereabouts is it?”

“Not very far from Saint Sulpice. But see—the curtain rises.”

The first act was just closing.

“Arthur, will you permit me to throw the bouquet to Mademoiselle Ninon, when she concludes this air?”

“No, indeed! Throw the bouquet I gave you to that girl! Much value you set on my presents!”

“Indeed I value them, and this one in

particular; but I must throw it to her. *Do give me leave.*"

"Indeed I shall not."

"I am very sorry, then; but—but I *must* throw it without your permission."

"Shall *I*?" said Edgar.

"Thank you—no."

And with a quick, peculiar movement, which she followed up with her eyes, she flung the bouquet on to the stage: it fell at the singer's feet. The audience redoubled their applause. Ninon received it gracefully, bent her head over its beautiful flowers, looked up hastily, and threw a quick meaning glance at Florence, whose face, hitherto so excited, began to settle into something like calm satisfaction.

"I shall not stay," exclaimed Arthur, savagely, "to be slighted and insulted in this way!" And he turned to the door.

“ Arthur—Arthur !” said Florence, “ you must—you—oh, do remain ! I have a reason ! You must—you must stay ! Ask him, Mr. Huntingdon !”

Thus entreated, the boy sat down again, though with a very bad grace. When the second act commenced, and Ninon returned to the stage, the door of the box in which were our party was opened, and a note handed to Florence. Edgar was puzzled—Arthur more annoyed than ever ; but both were silent. Mrs. Laughnan could not allow such impropriety to pass unnoticed, and commenced a lecture, which Florence interrupted by the assurance that remonstrance was useless, that she would be improper, and would this evening account to nobody. She said the opera was stupid, and at the end of the second act wished to go ; she had heard enough. None of them had ever seen Flo-

rence so peremptorily selfish before ; all they could do was to wonder. They departed before the conclusion of the opera : the night's amusement had been completely spoiled, and it seemed by Florence. Edgar, having escorted the ladies to their carriage, strolled quietly on to the Rue Larray. Arthur announced his intention of *walking* home.

“ Oh, no, Arthur ! you must ride. I want you—I cannot do without you.” She had used her best argument. She could not do without him ! He at once entered the carriage. “ Thank you, Arthur dear ; you are so kind ! Oh, how slowly this man does drive ! ”

“ I never knew such strange behaviour,” began Mrs. Laughnan. “ In the first place, to throw away that beautiful bouquet which Arthur was so generous as to buy you. It

must have cost some twelve or fifteen francs."

"Never mind that, aunt," said Arthur.

"Yes, but I do; and then to receive a letter from nobody knows who, in the face of a full theatre, and by the hand of one of its menials!"

"Now, mamma, it is useless. I did it, and would do it again. If you will not," she added, gaily, "let us enjoy peace, I will do what Arthur threatened, namely, walk."

And so, in peace, they proceeded to the Champs Elysées. Mr. Laughnan had retired an hour ago. He never accompanied them to what he considered these late entertainments.

"Good night, mamma! I am very tired. Arthur," she whispered, "come with me."

He followed her to her room, his

veins tingling with returned delight at the thought that he was going to be admitted into her confidence, and be of service to her. She closed the door, and spoke hurriedly—

“There is no time to be lost! I have none for explanation! Only this much I will tell you: that I threw away your bouquet to save your friend”—this was artfully put—“*your friend*, Mr. Huntingdon, from I know not yet what amount of danger. I will tell you all, after. You must get a remise yourself. We cannot have the carriage—quickly. You must get me into it, and come with me, without any one in the house knowing. Will you?”

“Anything, Florence! anything for you!”

“That’s a dear fellow!” and she kissed her brave young hero of a cousin.

How that embrace leaped through his

whole being! What would he not have done for Florence? Fought, ay, ten thousand dragons, ay, and ten thousand more. He kissed his Florence back. He was no more a boy; of course not. He tore himself away like any other knightly paladin, swearing to see her through all perils; and yet he had not the remotest idea of what he was promising. He returned in about five minutes, heated, flushed, but exultant. The path was clear: aunt had retired; the remise was waiting. Down the staircase, that would insist on creaking every now and then. A door opened, surely? No! all right.

“Vite! vite! Rue Larray — numero onze—vite! vite!” And away they went, as fast as remises in Paris can go, under the most favourable circumstances.

“I have the key. The old fellow is in

bed. He thought it was only for me. Can you tell me all about it now?"

Florence related how she had heard the conversation in the drawing-room, and what had been its nature :

"Well, when they had gone, I sat down and wrote to Mademoiselle Ninon, telling her of the intercepted letter, of the intended visit to-night, and the preconcerted challenge ; not forgetting to mention that one of them would be disguised. I looked for her address, but scarcely expected to find it ; in fact, I suppose she has some other name, and very likely is not a resident in Paris. I was distracted. My only chance was either to see you and beg of you to go to the theatre and discover her address, or go myself. You were out. Papa wanted me to write for him. What was I to do ? It was time to dress. It seemed as if I was powerless.

When I came down, and you gave me the beautiful bouquet, it struck me at once that I could hide my letter in it, and thus throw both to Mademoiselle Ninon. You are not offended now, are you, Arthur?"

"No, not at all, Florence. Pray go on."

"That note which I received at the theatre was from her, in answer to mine, giving her address, and saying that she should hope to see me. As it happened, I had already learned from Mr. Huntingdon where she lived. We are going there now. See, I fancy we are already there."

.
.

"A thousand thanks, Madame! a thousand thanks! You are too good—I trouble you frightfully. I shall never forget your goodness. A thousand, thousand thanks!"

All this voluble and exaggerative thanksgiving came from the lips of Ninon, as she emerged from the room of "the dark lady," upon whom, driven by the gravity of the occasion, she had presumed to call. She had been begging what she called an enormous favour—namely, asking accommodation for a young English lady, and perhaps attendant, who might be of the greatest service to her shortly, but whom she could not at present receive in her own rooms. Many apologies did she make for the intrusion; many fears did she express, particularly that she should keep her good friend from retiring to rest until late. Then, being assured that such was not the case, she repeated her thousand thanks, and ran down herself to admit Florence. Edgar had already arrived, and was upstairs. She received Florence and her cousin with smiles

and words of the warmest welcome, protesting over and over how much she was indebted for the timely intimation of the threatened visit. She explained that they must be content to wait till a favourable moment should arrive for their intervention, should it be necessary ; and should such not be required, she promised that they should at least be present at the *dénouement* of the approaching scene. And, above all things, she assured the alarmed Florence, with a laughing face which bespoke an easy confidence, that there should be no duel, and that Edgar should incur no danger. With this she introduced them to "the dark lady," and left them.

My hero was sitting on the sofa upstairs, reading Lamartine's verses to Byron, when Ninon entered. She had on a long cloak, which completely enveloped her figure.

As Edgar rose to salute and congratulate her on the brilliant success which had attended her "benefit," she flung off her cloak, appearing in the *vivandière* costume in which she had won her late triumph, but, to Edgar's surprise, with the addition of a pair of pistols fastened to her waist, and a rapier hanging at her side.

"Mademoiselle has had a great success; do I see the trophies of admiration?"

"No, indeed. Mademoiselle has had a great deal of trouble."

"Then, she is going to the wars?"

"Yes, to-night."

"How?"

Ninon laughed, pirouetted, and sang out—

"'Malbrook se va t'en guerre.' Bravissimo! You know that writing?—pretty writing—n'est ce pas? Tra la la."

"I don't know it. You are wild to-night."

"You don't know that writing? You know that name, perhaps?" And she showed Edgar the last line of the letter.

"Of course I do. Show it me again. What on earth is it? Do you know her?"

"Oh, the inquisitive!" There was a knock below. "Hark! now we must be sober."

She began smoothing the folds of her dress, arranged her hair at the glass, examined the pistols, and became perfectly grave. Edgar could make nothing of it all; he resumed his seat on the sofa.

Meanwhile, the visitors from whom had proceeded this last knock were astonished at being admitted so readily.

"Is not Mademoiselle engaged?"

“Yes ; but she ordered me to admit Monsieur Chasseloup.”

They ascended, knocked at Ninon’s door, and entered. Edgar, seeing two complete strangers, rose to be introduced.

“There is no necessity for introduction or compliments,” said the hostess. “You had better be seated again, Mr. Huntingdon. But who is this fellow ?”

“This fellow” was a strange-looking animal. Every feature in his face gave the lie to every other ; his countenance seemed patchwork. His hair was profuse, and jet-black—so were his whiskers and moustaches ; his eyes were grey.

“Allow me to introduce Monsieur de Ventour,” said Chasseloup, rather taken aback at the strange reception given to them by Ninon. He had expected cold civility, not rudeness, from the young lady

whom he worshipped; and he had hoped to fall quite naturally into a quarrel with the other guest.

“Indeed! And pray what brought him here? I have not the honour of his acquaintance.”

Chasseloup grew confused. Ninon awaited his reply. The only way he could see out of the difficulty, so unexpectedly raised, was to stammer out the truth.

“Why—he came to—to be my second in a—a duel which I thought was possible between that—that—Englishman—and myself.”

“What mean you?” asked Edgar, though without rising.

“Oh! I understand, Mr. Huntingdon! if you do not. Do not trouble yourself; I will arrange all. Certainly, gentlemen!” she said, turning to her last-arrived visitors. “A duel, by all means. I will be that Eng-

lishman's second, on one condition: that the second, Monsieur de Ventour—what a superb name!—and myself fight first.”

“Impossible!” said Chasseloup; “a lady!”

“Oh! we will waive that. Monsieur de Ventour has entered my house most uncere-
moniously, and I choose to be insulted.”

“What can she mean?” Edgar thought.

“Are you skilful, sir? Just parry with your arm once or twice. I merely wish to test your skill.”

And she made two or three rapid thrusts with her rapier at De Ventour, who, quite taken aback, and evidently unaccustomed to such onslaughts, threw up his right arm wildly to protect himself. The weapon was, of course, struck upwards by the motion, and caught in the locks of his luxuriant hair. With a rapid and peculiar jerk, Ninon withdrew it, and, horrible to relate, with it the

splendid tresses of a superb wig! and the adorned head of Monsieur de Ventour became the bald crown of Edward Bingham!

"By Jove! if it is not Bingham!" exclaimed Edgar, jumping up with sudden amazement.

Ninon was too overcome by a most violent fit of laughing to attend to the exclamation; neither was it possible for Edgar to restrain himself, and he too chimed in with the most uncontrollable roar of merriment, such as he had been a stranger to for many a day. Chasseloup stamped and fumed.

"I—I—know him," Edgar contrived to get out by degrees, amidst his hysterical laughter.

"You know him? You know him? O! qu'il est drôle. Mon Dieu! I shall die. O Chasseloup! que vous êtes bête. Voilà! tra la la!"

And she skipped about the room, holding up the rapier, surmounted by the magnificent wig. Again she approached her unfortunate victim.

"You prefer pistols, I see. They are here."

She drew one of them from her waist and cocked it. Chasseloup ran forward. Bingham, again with instinctive cowardice, threw up his arm and struck the pistol, which went off instantaneously. Florence, Arthur, and the dark lady, in consternation came rushing into the room. To their still greater surprise they found Ninon, Edgar, and even Chasseloup, laughing beyond all sense of control. Edgar rolling on the sofa, Chasseloup leaning against the mantelpiece, wiping away the tears which sprang from boisterous hilarity, Ninon bent almost double, and Bingham rising slowly from the floor,

his forehead and bald front blacker even than the locks which, but a minute ago, had hung there. The pistol had been charged only with powder. Florence but added to the resistless flood of laughing, Arthur absolutely screamed, even "the dark lady" had recourse to her handkerchief. When gravity was somewhat restored, Ninon turned to Edgar—

"You say you know this brave gentleman, so well disguised?"

"Yes, well. He professes to be my greatest enemy."

Chasseloup made an exclamation of surprise. "He said he did not know you, sir."

"Silence! Monsieur Chasseloup; one at a time. This gentleman wishes to go and— and wash himself, I should think." Another outburst. "Before you go, would you address the audience?"

"This is not the end," said Bingham, even his grey eyes flashing fire. "The drama is not concluded."

"Not begun, I should think," answered Arthur, "considering we have only just finished the farce."

There was another roar of laughter.

"Curse—blast it all!" shouted Bingham, infuriated, and rushed to the door.

"Stay, sir," said Ninon, throwing herself before him, and extending the dreaded rapier; "I should feel grateful for the letter which ought to have reached me this morning, and which you bribed the concierge to waylay. I do not like losing my property. This is it, is it? Thank you. Now you can go."

He was gone. The faces of all were serious enough now; not a smile was there to be seen. Nearly all of them seemed to look for an explanation.

“So, Monsieur Chasseloup!” Ninon began gravely, “you came here to pick a quarrel with that Englishman, and brought that fellow as your second. Now listen to me. This morning, this young lady, at whose house you called—you will doubtless remember—overheard by accident the conversation in which you invented the plot which has terminated as you see. She kindly communicated that plot to me in a letter which she ingeniously conveyed in this beautiful bouquet at the theatre. So I was quite prepared. I did not know, as I do now, that this gentleman was acquainted with your friend, Monsieur de Ventour; that accounts for the disguise. But I was aware from this young lady’s letter that he would be disguised: and of this was I sure, that disguise could only arise from cowardice. You,” she turned to Edgar, “must see

through all this mystery now. You, Monsieur Chasseloup ! I suppose, are in want of another second ! Where is he ? *We* are ready."

The Frenchman approached Edgar.

"It is not easy to explain ; but it must be done. My feelings towards Mademoiselle Ninon she at least knows ; you I leave to guess them. Those feelings it was that led me to this unfortunate affair. Jealous of you, I would fain have quarrelled with you. This man, who has figured so ignominiously to-night, and whom I know but slightly, did his best to encourage those feelings, and offered to aid me in carrying them into execution. I knew not—for his positive assurances were to the contrary—that he was acquainted with you, much less that he was your enemy, as you have declared. I meditated a base action : he instigated me

to, or at least made me the participator of, a baser one. I apologise for both. For the first time in my life, I am ashamed of myself!"

Edgar hastened to accept an apology thus tendered, and to mediate between him and Ninon. And Monsieur Chasseloup departed with the assurance that she would rest satisfied with the chastisement that had so speedily followed upon what she confessed was the only breach of honour of which she had ever known him guilty, and that she would never upbraid him with to-night's unhappy scene in any future lovers' quarrels.

With many, many thanks, and gentle words, and amusing explanations, Edgar saw Florence and her cousin start for the Champs Elysées, and then went up stairs again to Ninon. "The dark lady" was still with her. To her Edgar turned.

"I owe you also my sincerest thanks for the generous interest you have taken in perfect strangers. I fear we have all interfered with your rest. Can I in any way repay you?"

"You owe me nothing," she answered in a tone of tender melancholy ; adding, with a sickly smile, "if you did, I fear you could not repay me. I am glad if I have been of service."

And she bade both good-night, and left them. Ninon was explaining more fully to Edgar the parts of the plot which he did not yet fully comprehend, when another knock was given, and "the dark lady" re-entered.

"You asked just now," she said to Edgar, "if you could repay me for what you were good enough to call my generosity. I said that you could not. It has struck me that

you might possibly confer on me a great and lasting favour."

"You have only to name it."

"I want to convey a sum of money yearly to a person who must not suspect the quarter from which it comes. The office, if you accept it, is a troublesome one. I know no one else, and I am encouraged by your manner to ask you to perform it."

"You are right. I will perform it with pleasure."

"You will have to seek out a stranger; one of course as strange to you as I am."

"That presents no difficulty."

"But I do not know her name."

"Nor her address?"

"Yes! her address I *do* know. You will have to communicate with her quickly; for she may not be in Paris long; but that

I cannot tell. I will seek the address—I have it.”

She left the room. During her absence Ninon’s explanations were resumed. She returned shortly.

“It is No. 17, Rue Laroche, in the Quartier Latin: you seem to know it?”

“No, no; but I have heard the name. Well?”

“It is a miserable street; miserable as the people who live in it. As I said, I cannot tell you whom to ask for; but at No. 17 ask for a woman—an Englishwoman—of your country, if I mistake not, who has been there about two months—handsome, but in abject misery; though, God knows! not such misery as she has caused.”

“Yes, yes,” said Edgar, hurriedly and excitedly; “am I to bring her to you?”

“Heaven forbid!”

He rose; his face pallid as the face of the dead. "Heaven forbid! Say rather, heaven grant it! Yes, I will bring her, and with her, Mary Linwood! will I bring Horace Cooper!"

She uttered a loud, piercing shriek, which shot up wildly into the still night, and rushed to the door.

"Oh, I am known! I am—O sir, leave me!—let me depart. Why—why—have I not enough suffered? Leave me! leave me!"

"Hear me. You must—must hear me," Edgar exclaimed, in tones as passionate as hers; and, resuming his own and her language, as he almost dragged her from the door—"Be calm; be calm—it is useless—you shall—you must hear me. Have you ever heard the name of Edgar Huntingdon?"

The name seemed to calm her. She gazed earnestly at him, and said,

“Yes; are you he?”

“I am Edgar Huntingdon. Listen to me. That woman, whom you would aid, suffers for you! Nay, I beseech you, listen to me. I swear to you by everything sacred that if I fail to convince you, you shall depart and I will depart, and none shall be wiser for this my discovery. Yes, I tell you, and I tell you again: that woman’s misery is self-imposed; imposed, that it may seek out and relieve yours. She has been a vagrant; she has starved for days; she has been houseless for nights, because she sought you.”

“And why?” she asked indignantly, and all her excitement returning.

“Why? To tell you that she had *not* wronged you; that Horace Cooper had not

wronged you ; but you had wronged—were still—*are* still wronging both.”

“Heaven ! I will not—I will not hear more. Let me go ; I will—I——”

“One—one moment more !” Edgar exclaimed, bursting out into the most impassioned appeal. “Oh, if you had sat by Horace’s bedside the days, the nights, the weeks of intensest agony, as I have sat there and witnessed the burning pain, the delirious torture, the living hell that preyed upon his shattered existence, you would not turn the deaf ear you try to turn to me now. Oh, if you love—if you ever loved him, hearken to me yet awhile. As there is a God in heaven whom I worship, I swear that all I utter is truth—bitter, mournful truth. I have been with him through all his sufferings. He sank beneath the blow ; he became—he is an utter wreck, hanging

to life but upon a single hope, the hope of yet telling all to Mary Linwood. I have a right to be heard, for I have soothed him—nursed him—prayed with him and for him—and for you!”

She was calmer, and did not attempt to leave him; but she turned away, hiding her face. It reminded Edgar of the rainy day, when he had found Cooper at King’s Bench Walk, and had first heard that melancholy story.

“So then, hear me,” he continued. “I will not extenuate: God knows that *he* would not! He had often told me he had confessed to you that he had not always been what he should have been; that he had been sadly, I suppose I may utter it to you—sadly acquainted with sin until he knew Mary Linwood—until you came, bringing penitence, and love, and peace.”

“Yes, yes,” she sobbed out, without raising her buried face; “the past was to be forgotten—had been avowed—had been forgiven—but it was renewed!”

“No, no! I swear it. It was not—was not renewed. Hear me through. In me he confided. I saw your letter—that letter which has eaten into his brain, and lacerated his heart. I read how, rushing to his arms, you found them occupied by another”—he shuddered, and could hear the very trickling of her tears—“by her whom you mentioned to-night. That woman had been the sharer of his guilt; it cannot, it need not, be denied; you knew it. She went to bid him farewell—for it must be owned she had loved him in her own sad way—to bid farewell to sin—wrong, all. For her the trial was severe; it was the sudden snapping of a chain that had woven itself among her exist-

ence. And he—he, with his tender, pitying heart—witness of such wild regret, endeavoured to soothe it. O Mary Linwood! question not the strange ways of God; let us rather bow to them. At that moment you arrived. You know the rest—no, not the rest; you never will know the long, protracted, never-ceasing anguish which has made the once handsome form and beautiful intellect of him whom you loved little better than the skeleton of a deformity, and the chattering of an idiot. Had he, could he, have loved you less, he might have—as indeed he has not?—steeled, in return to sin, his agonized sense of omnipotent sorrow!”

She turned her full eyes upon him, and in that look, it seemed, was concentrated every feeling of every moment since misery first began. She placed her hand upon his

shoulder, retaining her intense gaze unmoved.

“Edgar Huntingdon! dare you swear, by Him who sent you here for noble purposes, that you believe solemnly the things you utter?”

“Yes, I dare! Shall I?”

“No—no. I believe it all!”

Edgar's arms opened to receive her, as she fell forward. Not loudly—but oh! how bitterly!—broke forth those tears of love, agony, regret, remorse, of the tumult of all the wildest feelings; tears that had gathered through the long days and watchful nights of banishment, and solitude, and hopelessness. Edgar moved not. An hour ago, and this stricken sufferer and he were strangers—had never spoken to each other—and now she was weeping on his breast. But he felt as though she had a right to shelter there.

It was the spot which had harboured Cooper's grief, never uttering, but always soothing it: there had he found his consolation—his solitary stay. Upon the pillow where he had so often laid his aching head, now rested hers: hers that had been hitherto reft of all refuge, aching in strange lands, and none to prop—no home to shelter it. Thank Heaven! a shelter had been found at last!

CHAPTER X.

"Thus lived—thus died she: never more on her
Shall sorrow light."

Don Juan.

"The less of this cold earth, the more of heaven."

MILMAN.

THE Folkestone boat was coming into Boulogne. The bells kept up a constant ringing; the officials within the ropes, with their terrible swords, were putting on that fierce expression with which I suppose they consider it their duty to welcome any new comers from *perfid*e Albion. Who has not laughed—some foolish people swear—at

them, and their swords, and the whole affair, many a time?

Among the numerous passengers which the goodly packet disgorged, was a young man, tall but considerably bent, who appeared a confirmed invalid. He did not seem at all struck, one way or the other, by the scene; nor did he manifest even the vaguest consciousness, till he was addressed by a well-known voice:

“Well, Horace! delighted to see you! I thought you would come. Get in there; we have no time to lose; I want to go on to Paris by the first train. I will see to your baggage. I will follow you to the station.”

The journey was a silent one. Edgar wished to avoid conversation. Once Cooper said—

“You are altered, Edgar! You speak, you look differently. Are the Fairforts in Paris?”

“Not that I know of.”

This was about all that was uttered by either of them. The morning after the discovery related in the foregoing chapter, Edgar had written to Cooper, begging of him most earnestly to come over at once to Paris, where he would be of invaluable assistance, and promising to meet him at Boulogne. To tell the truth, though Cooper had started immediately on receiving the intimation that he could be of use to his friend, he had by this entirely forgotten that he had undertaken the journey, and sat back in the railway carriage perfectly listless. Edgar was not sorry for this, as he did not wish to unveil the truth till their arrival in Paris; and, after all, what he had to unveil was not, sad to say, of a cheering nature. It is true, he had found Mary Linwood—that he had satisfied her of the truth of all that he had

uttered ; it is true, that he was going to take Cooper to her ; but it is also true, that in all probability he should take him only to see her die. The physicians had assured Edgar that she must have been for months in the last stage of consumption, and that it only required such a shock as the one which had been inflicted to perfect the havoc wrought by a long state of suffering. In disclosing these facts to Cooper, the most consummate tact would be required ; and Edgar's difficulties were increased a thousandfold when, on his arrival in Paris, he found a letter awaiting him at his hotel, praying him to proceed to the Rue Larray as soon as was possible, for Mary Linwood was dying ; but not to go without Cooper. She insisted on seeing him. It was evident that tact must yield to the exigency of the moment. No sooner had he read the letter than he said, at once—

"Do you remember Emma?"

"Yes; I have reason."

"Do you know where she is?"

"No, I have seen her once only since then."

"I have seen her."

"Ah! Where?"

"Here, in Paris, the other day. She has been seeking *her*—you know whom I mean."

"Yes."

He said it, as it were, indifferently.

"Suppose she was to find her?"

"Impossible! O Edgar! if I could only let her know the truth!"

"I believe that Emma has discovered some trace of her."

"Do not, do not raise my hopes if they are not to be fulfilled."

"If you were to see her, what would you feel?"

“Comfort, such as I cannot express.”

“But if you found her only to surrender her to heaven?”

“Still I should be comforted. Tell me, think you there is any chance?”

“Yes, Horace. Emma has—has found her, but she is dying.”

“Is it—is it true? Oh, do not torture me!”

“It is most true. She is in Paris.”

“How do you know?”

“I have seen her.”

“Seen her! And I—O God! Edgar, speak!”

“I would take you to her. Can you bear it? I have explained all; she believes it, and longs to see you before she dies.”

Cooper stood motionless a moment, then, with marvellous calmness, said—

“Now, I can go. Yes, I can bear it.

Lead me ; no, no, let us go now—now, at once.”

Mary Linwood lay on her bed of suffering—and, it seemed probable, of death—in her room in the Rue Larray. Ninon was pouring forth the most earnest supplications, as she knelt at a *priedieu* before an ebony crucifix. Every now and then she rose from it to minister to the few wants of the invalid. A priest, habited in his stole, and holding the golden vessel which contained, and from which he had administered, the last gifts of his church, stood by, mute, but deeply affected. At the window was a poor creature weeping bitterly, dressed in the plainest apparel. It was Emma.

“He is long,” said a weak voice.

"Yes, dear! but he will be here soon," answered Ninon.

"Patience! my daughter. It is God's will," said the priest, soothingly.

"They come," said Ninon, and hastened to the door. She opened it gently. Cooper fell on his knees by the bed-side, and burst into tears over the hand which was stretched out to accept him. Edgar stood apart.

"A melancholy history," said the priest to him, in a subdued tone; "but the good God loves those who suffer."

Edgar bent his head in reverence and acceptance of the consoling words, and stood with folded arms gazing upon the reclining and the prostrate figures of those whom, if the words were true, God must indeed have loved. Again the gentle voice spoke.

"Emma!" it said, "wont you come?"

The girl turned, and, involuntarily it

seemed, knelt by Cooper's side. She did not disturb him, for his face was covered, and his tears were still falling fast. Mary Linwood joined both their hands; Cooper looked up, as though to seek her meaning.

"I am dying," she said. "God is very good—is very just. You think so, Horace?"

"Yes; very—very," he whispered, faintly.

"It is so," she continued, "or we should not have met thus. Do you both pardon me?"

Neither replied; the question sounded so strangely.

"I know all now. *I* was wrong. I know, Emma, that you sought me. I knew you, that night, when you asked alms in this one's name. I was prepared for it. I was disguised in every way. I forgot that from God there is no disguise. He has done this."

Edgar noticed now, as she spoke the

words, what he had not remarked before—that her hair falling around her, was auburn.

“I intended to provide for you, Emma. I bore you no hatred, even when I thought that you had wronged me. God knows this. Would you have blessed my union with this one, could I have lived?”

“Oh, yes! For this I was wandering; for this——”

“Oh, but,” Cooper burst in, at last, “you will—you must live! we shall—you will not leave me now—now, after——”

“Peace, Horace! Yes, I shall leave you. It is His holy will. May I bless you both? I am a Catholic now.”

He bowed his head; showing, though he spoke not, how dearly he should prize her benediction. She gave it to them solemnly, and it seemed with difficulty. Her strength was failing her. She bent down, and first

kissed her, the child once of sin, now of penitence and poverty; and then him to whom she had so long retained the rare fidelity of sorrow, and whose love she prized even in these last moments.

“Mr. Huntingdon! you will take care of these, will you not? Good bye, Ninon! Always remain good. Hor—— Horace! Bless me, father!”

The priest raised his hands in benediction. She clasped her crucifix, fell gently back, and was in heaven!

Ninon rose, closed the curtains, and returned to her *priedieu*. All was over!

.
.

A simple monument, in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, a little to the left of the willows which weep over the sorrows of Heloise and Abelard, points out, to those who care to

see it, the grave of Mary Linwood. Every Thursday, towards evenfall, comes a lay sister of charity with fresh tapers for the altar, and fresh immortelles for the tomb. The lay sister is Emma. With the consent of Edgar, who considered himself her appointed guardian, by Mary Linwood's last request, the good priest had received her into that Church which is certainly the most gentle to abandoned sin, and the most consoling to a tearful penitence. For the rest, her days are spent in visiting those who suffer from the justly-imposed hand of that Providence whom she now so deeply reverences ; in soothing those sorrows, alleviating those woes, and winning from that life, in all of which she herself has had so sad but so fruitful an experience.

CHAPTER XI.

“And if you do but wait the hour,
There never yet was human power,
That could evade, if unforgiven,
The patient watch and vigil long
Of him who treasures up a wrong.”—*Mazeppa*.

“He comes not. I wish that I were dead!”—TENNYSON.

TEN miles above Afrel, in the same valley in which rises the smoke of that sequestered village, is a pretty spot seated in a deep hollow, called Ashford Hall. Within, on his cheerless hearth, stood its possessor, Edward Bingham. It was a stormy night-fall, late in November. The wind rattled on

the roof of the ancient and dilapidated mansion, seized the smoke as it emerged from the creaking chimney-pots, and whirled it up into the air with sportive fierceness. Then it rushed into the house, and ran shrieking along the corridors; again sallied out into the shuddering night, and, with a savage gripe, swayed and shook the bewildered firs. Below the lodge, the river hurried on, turbulent and foaming, spurning its banks, tearing up dams, and shouting out defiance to the darkness. And within Ashton Hall, reigned there peace? Otherwise, indeed. A tempest more terrific, more scathing still, raged there; the fury of un-sleeping hate, and the tumultuous plans and longings of revenge. Huddled up in an immense arm-chair sat Bingham's mother. She was a little woman, and must have been pretty in her hey-day: but that might have

been centuries ago, before the flood, or perhaps before the Adamite creation. Old, she had not the serenity of age: her years inspired no love, her experience no esteem. Her whole aim in life had been to appear better, socially, than she really was, or ever could be. She was worldly, and nothing more: ungodliness pervaded her through and through. Her children she had taught to aspire to positions, without being able, or even thinking to teach them how to occupy those positions with dignity. She had always been pushing herself into society above both her birth, her breeding, or her deserts, and despising that which was her natural and appropriate sphere. Now that society found her a nuisance, those who once countenanced her for her beauty, forsook her with it; and they who should always have been her companions, refused

now to accept the convenient humility of one
 sion whom no option any longer remained.
 the creature thoroughly disappointed woman.
 up into the arm up her children without
 Then it rushed into so much to say, that
 shrieking along the corridor-sight. Edward
 out into the shuddering night, asked her to
 savage gripe, swayed and shook to need of
 dered firs. Below the lodge, the trouble
 hurried on, turbulent and foaming, to her;
 ing its banks, tearing up dams, and she either
 out defiance to the darkness. And with them.
 Ashton Hall, reigned there peace? Or been
 wise, indeed. A tempest more terrific, never
 scathing still, raged there; the fury of her
 sleeping hate, and the tumultuous plans and
 longings of revenge. Huddled up in an
 immense arm-chair sat Bingham's mother.
 She was a little woman, and must have been
 pretty in her hey-day: but that might have

this occasion, the old dame was not in the sweetest of humours ; for, on her arrival, she found her son completely solitary. It was quite evident, however, that she must be especially needed ; and from this some comfort was derived.

Previously to Bingham's unfortunate escape in the Rue Larray, he had entertained a general intention of injuring Edgar Huntingdon whenever an opportunity might arise, without purposing to put himself much out of the way to discover that opportunity. He was ready to seize, but not to devote his time in order to create one. But, since the famous night in Paris, this state of feeling had altogether disappeared. Now, he harboured but one idea, one definite, exclusive longing : at all costs, and before all schemes, was the burning desire for revenge. The opera-singer's room was ever

before him. The figure of Ninon dancing about with the fatal wig upon her rapier, followed him in his sleep. When he looked at himself in the glass, he expected to find his forehead all besmeared, and to hear the click of an unloaded pistol. His brain was on fire: he tried to be calm. He knew that any scheme, to be successful, must be the result of cool, patient, collected thought. This time, the plan must not recoil. He passed days and days in elaborating schemes; his dull brain could complete none. At last, he saw that there was but one resource left—the never-failing one—to admit his mother into his counsel. Of course he did not relate the ridiculous scene, which had stimulated and crowned his determined hate. But one thing he uttered: revenge! give him revenge!

“Damn it! madam,” he exclaimed, im-

patiently, as he paced the room, "can you suggest nothing?"

"How crossly you speak to your mother!" whimpered out the old dame. Not that she was hurt in the least; but she thought she might turn it to account. She speedily discovered that sort of thing would not answer just at present.

"None of your blubbering here. I hate it, and I won't stand it. Curse on it! that won't help me. If you can't give me some idea, I'll order your carriage, and you can go."

"You say that you believe Miss Fairfort loves him?" she began, smothering her rage.

"I've told you that a thousand times. What the deuce is the good of asking me again?"

"Do you say he is religious, moral?"

“Of course he is, the fool. I’ve told you that too before. What on earth has that to do with it?”

“You may find out,” said the old hag, rising. “I shall go. I had an excellent plot, but you may make it out yourself, for I won’t be treated so.”

“Nonsense, mother! I didn’t mean it. I know you have a good plan—you always have.”

Thus pacified, she resumed her seat.

“Well, then, I tell you, I don’t believe in that sort of thing. I know what young men are, or, at least, I used to know. I don’t suppose they have changed much; and believe me that this Huntingdon is no better than the rest. Now, if you can only prove to Miss Fairfort ——”

“What?”

“That he is not so good as ——”

“Good, be damned ! Is that all you’ve got to say ? You’re not a bit of use. I’m hanged if I’ll be pestered with this nonsense any longer ! Here, you ! Darvey ! order Mrs. Bingham’s carriage at once.”

“I shall not turn out such a night as this, and ten miles to go !”

“You won’t ? I take my oath you will. Look you, madam ! You can *go home*, or not, as you please ; but you won’t stay here. If you prefer the road to your bed, you can have it ; but in ten minutes you leave this.”

The little old woman rose from her chair in a fit of fury ; stamped, and swore, and cursed her son, and began knocking the ornaments about. At this Bingham thrust her out of the room. Then came a kicking, and shouting, and a rush of servants, and a scream, and carriage-wheels might be faintly heard rolling away.

“Curse the woman!” muttered Bingham; “I dare say she’s right after all. I’ll think of it. I got rid of her famously. What a tiresome old hag she is! By —— I’ll punish that fellow yet!”

And the wind howled, and the firs threw up their arms, and the river rushed madly on; and jolting along the heavy roads, through the rain, through the long miles, the bad mother cursed the bad son.

.
.

The shutters are not yet closed in the oak-panelled dining-room at Fairfort. The fog is thickening, creeps up the park, mounts the terrace, and looks in at the stately windows. The kine stand motionless and with outstretched necks, little tempted by the short, moist, brown November herbage. The old trees look as though, to them, spring

will never again return ; they are utterly reft. The lake is a dull, leaden colour, barely distinguishable from the surrounding atmosphere. There is no light in the dining-room, beyond the quiet glow of the half-expiring fire. It glistens slightly on the panes, the ceiling, and a panel here and there, leaving corners in complete darkness ; on the decanters and the silver dessert-dishes, now and then condescending to notice a spoon, and even a fork or two. The massive mahogany sideboard it visits with particular marks of respect. His Lordship has retired to his study ; Frank sits cross-legged, with his hands clasped lazily behind his head ; occasionally nods, wakes up, and changes the position of his legs with strict impartiality. On the left-hand side of the hearth, on a low hassock, her right arm supporting her drooping head, and itself resting

on her knee, her gaze fixed steadily upon the firelight, sits Annette. Surely the blaze cannot shine upon that face of hers—'tis too pale ; but it certainly does shine ; and upon a stealthy tear which is rolling slowly down, and which she fears to brush away, lest Frank should see her. At last it falls.

“ Frank,” she says, softly.

“ Yes, dear.”

“ Am I disturbing you ?”

“ Not at all ; I was not sleeping.”

“ Have you heard of Edgar lately ?”

“ The last I heard of him was, that he had returned from abroad, and was in London ; but that was a fortnight ago.”

“ Poor fellow ! I wonder what he is doing ?”

“ I should think he is printing his poem.”

There was a pause, at length Annette said—

“Do you suppose, if it has a great success, that papa will think more of him?”

“Perhaps; but you cannot argue about prejudice, and about what will remove it, as you can of other things.”

“No, I suppose not; and it is only a prejudice. How hard for Edgar to have no one by him to comfort and cheer him! To have to prepare his poem by himself, without encouragement. Ah! It is—it is cruel to him!”

“And to you, poor Annette. But I do not despair yet.”

“Oh! but I do. He is alone, perhaps at this very hour, wandering in the streets of that vast comfortless place—seeking hope, and finding none; plodding on without sympathy—brave, noble, spiritual, unhappy, and not understood. And, if *I* only were with him, all would be well.”

She could not stay the tears that had long been rising. She hurried to the door.

“Annette ! Annette, dear !” said Frank, rising. But she was gone.

CHAPTER XII.

"I am strong again."

LONGFELLOW.

"Betrayed too early."

Don Juan.

AND where *was* Edgar? Hard at work in London. Yes! the cure had been wrought. He had been for a few days an *actor*; action had transformed him. By the death-bed of Mary Linwood the clog had fallen away, and he was potent, as of old; at least, the reward had been obtained, but by means of which he had little dreamed. The consciousness of the blessing which Heaven had, of

late, permitted him to confer, shed consolation about every moment of his being, and quieted him. His soul had lost its restlessness: his mind its vagrant reveries. The scene which he had witnessed in Paris had widened still more his charity; and if it did not exalt Hope, it, at least, perfected Faith. He looked upwards, and was satisfied: he did not fear grief now, and so it came about that he felt it less. He thought still of Annette, and with as tender a love; but a love that had no misgivings, but complete trust. He did not wish to anticipate or traverse God's supreme purposes. Was it an overstrained fancy which prompted him to the belief that God had driven him forth a restless wanderer, that he might bring together, for one moment on earth, the destinies, so rudely wrenched asunder, of Horace Cooper and Mary Linwood?

Nay, could he not travel much—much further back, and trace the guiding thread of Heaven's almighty schemes, even to his school-days; to the times when Bingham's unaccountable dislike had originated? Human ingenuity was at a loss to see how success could ever be granted to his, as ever fond, affection for Annette Fairfort. Human plans would fail, rotten as they are, to attain this still much-yearned-for consummation. But if God wished it, it would be done to-morrow, though the whole world should declare it impossible. And if God did not wish it—well, what matter? Edgar Huntingdon could live on without even this, and accomplish other ends. But why this change? He had believed all this before, but had felt no comfort from it. How was it now? And again would the death scene of the Rue Larray rise up before him; and

it was more or less clear. And every morning, at ten o'clock, my hero might have been seen walking across from his chambers to King's Bench Walk, and at five o'clock returning to them. And the intermediate hours had been spent, not as of old, in a losing battle with an unseen enemy; but in a stern, severe plodding through volumes of abstruse law, into which, nor sorrow, nor poetry, ever entered. The victory had been gained. Can you, dear reader, love Edgar Huntingdon as much as ever?

Cooper now lived with Edgar in Garden Court. He had become a different being since the night when Mary Linwood had taken her impressive leave of him and of earth. It might have been expected that he would sink under the feelings evoked by that solemn but heart-rending spectacle. But,

during the few moments in which it had pleased Heaven that he should be reunited to her, he had caught a glimpse of his duty, which seemed to be, as yet, to live: he had learned the supernatural holiness of resignation. Even in that last hour, when she showed how much she still, as she had always, loved him, she also showed that she loved One, far—far more. Since that day, Cooper's lips had never uttered a syllable of complaint. Edgar questioned him but little of his occupations, but was well aware that the morning of each day, in which he was regularly absent, was spent in acts very similar to the tender offices of her who, every Thursday evenfall, took fresh *immortelles* to the simple grave in Père la Chaise. He entered into all Edgar's plans, joined in many of his occupations, read the same books, was a companion in strolls, a sympathizer in sentiments,

and now—what a change!—the soother, not the soothed, in all sorrows!

Christmas was not far off. Edgar was sitting with Ada Bolton, in the little room—more comfortable now than when we last saw it—near Cumberland Market. On the first visit which he had made after his return from Paris, he had been much struck by the change in the girl's appearance. She was no longer a child; he no longer could entertain for her those almost ridiculous feelings which on their first meeting had predominated. She was not any more the mere infant whose fittest place he had thought to be in a nursery, and whose proper entertainment was a Mother-Goose story. Three months had changed all this: he approached her with all the deference due to womanhood. Sorrow makes us all precocious; but it was not sorrow alone that had wrought this rapid

alteration in Ada. It was evident that she was doomed to be a mother, with all the duties, cares, and dignities of such a position. This rendered Edgar's anxiety still greater ; but for the rest, it afforded him no slight comfort. It partly removed a fearful doubt that had long troubled his heart : he thought he would now, if possible, rid himself of it altogether.

“ Don't be angry with me, Ada, for my question ; believe me that it is prompted out of deep interest in you. I know, I believe firmly, that you have been wronged—barbarously wronged. But tell me, have you never—never wronged yourself ? How was it on the night I first met you ? ”

She blushed, but did not remove her face, or turn away from him.

“ I understand you. You have a right, Mr. Huntingdon, to ask me this. But for

you, such might have been. I know not—you know not—where hunger, poverty, and despair can lead any of us, especially those who have little to guard; but that little you have preserved. Oh, sir! I pray for you daily, that Heaven may bless you for what you did to me. I was dying of misery, of pain—I knew not what I did; I know more now. If God had not sent his angel in you, to shelter me that night, I might have become what I thank Him, and under Him you, I am not. Should I be a mother, mine will be the child of suffering and of wrong, but not of sin.”

To whom beside could this young creature utter these things? She had but one friend in the wide world, and that friend, though not of her own sex, had all a woman's tact, gentleness, and delicacy. The relations between them were singular. Stranger in

blood, Edgar fulfilled towards her at once the obligations of parent and friend : on him alone could she lean. Should she be a mother, to him must the child cling, as she herself had clung, for support. Surely he had a right to know that the mother was without spot or stain. She knew that the generous young man who had so tended the parent would not desert the offspring. Edgar noticed that she wore mourning now, but concluded that it was the mourning for the death, not of any human being, but of two angels whom she had once thought immortal — Love and Hope !

Things looked brighter now. The avowal of her complete innocence, coupled by the assurance of the landlady of the house where she lodged, spontaneously offered, that nothing had been able to persuade her to walk out unaccompanied, and that she had never

been cheered by a single visitor, both enabled and prompted Edgar to introduce her to the Pampesteras. The exiles he had found much as he had left them; the father weak, and almost inanimate, the daughter consoling, brave, cheerful, and generous. Pampesteras lived—only lived. He had become an old man, quiet and submissive: he had lost all volition. He was led by Catalina, without seeming either to enjoy, or to undergo. Whatever sad moments the young girl had, and doubtless she had many, she concealed them from Edgar; so completely, that a casual observer might have supposed her impassive to circumstances. But when Edgar first took Ada to St. John's Wood, it was evident that Catalina's heart was still most tender to impressions; and if she succeeded in hiding her grief, she threw no veil over her joy. She received the diffident

stranger with peculiar fondness, welcoming a sister, and hailing a long-sought friend. It was not so very hard for either, now, this life of theirs: each had one of her own sex in whom to confide, from whom to seek solace and solicit advice. But another, and a much more gratifying, because totally unexpected, advantage accrued from this acquaintance. Pampesteria himself took an immediate fancy to the pretty melancholy creature. He awoke from his apathy, talked with her, taught her chess, and would have her at times to read to him. For two years Edgar had been making every sacrifice, in order to shed some light around Pampesteria's dark existence, and in vain. A simple girl crosses his threshold, and the sleeper awakes. Sympathy is the true handmaid of those who suffer. Sorrow finds but one nurse,—a

mere echo,—a reflection; and its name, too, is Sorrow!

But what of the poem? Yes, what of the poem? Was it forgotten?—laid aside?—a worthless relic of the Past? Doubtless, some of Edgar's acquaintances thought so. No, no. Genius waits, but never tires! Woolfenden had perused the manuscript, which Edgar had given him in Paris, with unbounded delight. For the first time, he ceased to be critical. He begged Edgar to delay its publication till the spring came round, and the London season should commence.

And so the verses lie, disregarded, on a dusty shelf in Garden Court. And he who wrote them, goes over daily to King's Bench Walk, and reads law, and does his duty. He troubles himself not, now, as to how Catalina and Ada are employed. He wants them to

work no longer: friendship fills up their days, and he is satisfied. He circumscribes still more his own expenses, does all he can for those so strangely entrusted to him, and prays for Annette Fairfort. And so the year ends—and so, this chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

“That glorious sin,
Ambition, cursed by all who lose—
No crime to those who win.”—*Aytoun.*

“BASSANIO.—I tell thee what . . . I love thee.”
Merchant of Venice.

It was the middle of June—the height of the London season. The blood, the fashion, the wealth, the intellect, of the richest, the most aristocratic, and after all, perhaps, the most intellectual capital in the world, were assembled in the dazzling *salons* of the young, beautiful, daily-toasted Countess of Guildford. A group of the most select—

the high-priests of that goodly mass of distinguished worshippers — were collected about what everybody felt was the *throne* of the noble hostess. All mutely consented to pay her the homage due to the sultana of society.

“He will be here to-night,” her Ladyship was saying ; “but he is so much sought after, that I fear we must remain content, for some time, with the expectation of his presence.”

“I doubt if he prefers any circle to your Ladyship’s,” said a remarkable young man, who had a long pedigree, and wrote short poems for amateur Annuals, which were raged after by marriageable young ladies, and by no one else ; “but he has, I suppose, no choice. He pays the penalty of being famous.”

“If I knew who was detaining him, I

should bear them no love henceforward. He has taught me to feel again. Did you read the notice of his poem in the *Athenæum*? The Laureate is told to look to his laurels. For my part, I think they had better be put aside. We wanted passion—earnestness, and Mr. ——”

The sentence was interrupted by the announcement of him of whom the Countess spoke. This was no other than Edgar Huntingdon. His poem had succeeded even beyond all expectation. It was in everybody's mouth, on everybody's table, in many a private *boudoir*; it was *the* success of the season. Society forthwith began to pet its author, to run after him, to crown him. He did not undervalue its esteem; he did not affect to be regardless of its good opinion; he frankly avowed that its approval he had mainly sought. But he did not overrate his

triumph. He knew that he must have many, many more successes, before his position could be a permanent one. He received the honours showered down upon him with a frank and gracious satisfaction, his behaviour remaining such as it was when he had been regarded by those who knew him best as a promising young man. He was but little changed in the six months which had intervened since we last saw him ; he looked, perhaps, more manly ; thinner, paler even, but not so sad ; yet the countenance was still serious and thoughtful, and rarely relaxed into a genuine smile. He wore that undefinable but unmistakeable expression which success always confers. The Countess, who desired to manifest in his regard an especial mark of her respect, rose and advanced to meet him. Strange to say, she had no sooner welcomed him than Lord Fair-

fort and his daughter were announced. Her Ladyship turned round to greet her newly-arrived guests, and so it happened that Edgar was most suddenly brought face to face with his former friends. It was the first time that he had met either, and absolutely the first time he had seen his Lordship since the parting at Glendover. He turned, if possible, a little paler, but manifested no other outward sign of being moved. He offered his hand to both. Lord Fairfort took it courteously, but stiffly: Annette, with tremour, a slight blush, and a nervous, irrepressible warmth. Lady Guildford stood a moment or two—purposely, I think—addressing his Lordship, so the young people could not stand facing, nay, touching each other, in stupid silence.

“You look very, very pale,” said Edgar, in a subdued tone.

“Do I? You know I am always rather nervous, that is all. I congratulate you on your splendid and well-deserved success; no one is more rejoiced than—than I. I have read the poem: everybody praises you.”

“Praise is a poor substitute for ——”

Lord Fairfort, in moving away, broke off a sentence which was, nevertheless, as complete in its meaning to Annette, as if it had all been uttered. His Lordship bowed coldly, and left Edgar with the Countess. She was soon monopolizing the conversation of the young poet. The other listeners fell away.

“Do you feel all that you have written?”

“I fear I do,” Edgar answered, “or at least did. I rid myself of much grief in writing that poem. I had no confidant but my own heart: and so spoke frankly to it. And having uttered my sorrow, I found that

I had mitigated it. But, pardon me, your Ladyship betrays me into rather too frank a confession."

"Nay, Mr. Huntingdon! you are public property, now. *I* do not think you too frank. But, perhaps, *you* think *I* have not suffered, and am therefore not worthy of your confidence."

"The Countess of Guildford must have a poor opinion of poets' judgment; and yet have not all of them sung the same strain, that every step in ascent, either in the intellectual or the social world, is an increase of misfortune? Does your Ladyship forget that stanza of Childe Harold, commencing,

'He who ascends to mountain tops—'

"I know it well, and think you will find it marked in my private volume in the library. And so we agree, and you cannot be too frank. And I hope that a woman

who has lived—you see *I* am frank—nearly thirty years, and has necessarily had a pretty large experience, may ask for the confidence of a young man, destined, I am of opinion, for great things, but whose experience has been hitherto, it would appear, chiefly sorrow, without injuring her dignity, or seeking to play with his. I confess that your poem fascinates me; I am deeply interested in you. The world knows something of your attachment to Miss Fairfort; will you speak to me of it as you will not speak to the world? I think very highly of the young lady; and of this I am convinced—that she will never willingly mate with any of the rich, and sometimes handsome, nothings who haunt one's drawing-rooms, and make society—what it is.”

As may readily be supposed, a conversation, deeply interesting to both, and by its

nature highly flattering to the younger, but of no further importance to this history, ensued, and was maintained for no inconsiderable time. But in a more obscure corner of the same room words were being spoken which, though all unheard and unsuspected by Edgar Huntingdon, affected him much more remarkably.

Miss Fairfort had been already this season honoured—I *must* use the phrase in vogue—with three different avowals of love, and consequent offers, not one of which, the world said, but she ought to have accepted with alacrity. Annette seemed to hold an opposite opinion, for she certainly put all the three aside. Two of them had been made with Lord Fairfort's direct connivance, and refused with his Lordship's natural annoyance. The Earl of Glenbarton's love-making had also somehow—these things

will creep out—become eventually the theme of pretty extensive discussion, his want of success being the subject of the most unbounded astonishment. And so it came to pass, by reason of these repeated failures on the part of the very choicest “catches” in the matrimonial auction-mart, that all the promising young bloods became desperately frightened, as they had hitherto been enamoured, of this wayward beauty. And it not unfrequently happened that, at the very time when half the noble and eligible men in the room were yearning to whisper sweet discourse into the ear of Miss Fairfort, she was given over to the persecutions of a second-rate personage, whose impudence, so it was alleged, made up for the poverty of his deserts. On the present occasion, the second-rate, but much-envied personage, was no other than Edward Bingham.

“ Well, Miss Fairfort, then I lay it aside, since you order it. I must endeavour to forget; though to forget that I love you is impossible. But, will you pardon me? I plead not now for myself, that is over; but why—why—I plead for society—nay, I plead for your very self—why do you waste your precious affections upon the past?”

“ Sir, you presume too far!” she replied, the hasty colour breaking upon her countenance.

“ I know it—I knew you would answer me thus. But were these my last words, still should they warn you against throwing away your happiness, your life, for one who is utterly unworthy.”

“ Are you referring to yourself again, Mr. Bingham?” she asked, scornfully.

“ No! I refer to Edgar Huntingdon.”

“Who told me once that you were his avowed enemy.”

Two years ago the words were uttered. Thank God ! she remembered them.

Bingham bit his lips, and answered,

“But not yours, Miss Fairfort !”

“Permit me to say, that they are the same thing ;” and Annette rose.

“I will persist,” said Bingham, doggedly. “You know not on what sort of man you waste your love. I can show you. If I call to-morrow will you see me ?”

“I am not accustomed to refuse any one admittance,” she said, curtly, and swept away.

CHAPTER XIV.

“Je suis sûr qu'on ne m'inquiétera jamais justement ;
et c'est une folie de vouloir se précautionner contre l'in-
justice.”—JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

“Call 'me a fool
If this sweet lady lie not guiltless here
Under some biting error.”

Much ado about Nothing.

“By my life !
She never knew harm-doing.”—*Henry VIII.*

“This I hold firm !
Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt—
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled.
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness. If this fail,
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble.”

Comus.

THE following day was the fourteenth of
June ; day twice memorable in this our

story. When Edgar entered Rotten Row he received fresh proofs of his success. Not a man of reputation, not an encourager of rising celebrities, not a patroness of letters, not an enthusiastic young beauty, with whom he was ever so slightly acquainted, but would fain win from him a move, and repay him with a compliment. Sooth to say, he was—I know no other word sufficiently expressive—bored. Was he sickening of the incense already? Was the hecatomb beginning to putrefy? Were the fillets of flowers losing shape and colour, and sweet odour? Was he, like the traitress in the Roman Chronicle, oppressed by the golden bracelets and the jewelled guerdons? Not he, indeed. He had tasted of the goblet of triumph, and sipped moderately, and owned it to be very sweet. But, somehow, this day one of the old fits of nameless dejection

was upon him. And it was remarked, when he turned away from his surrounding admirers, that the young poet treated his success very cavalierly; wearing the new plumes carelessly enough, as though they had been upon his helm these fifty years, and he cared little what wind of Heaven sported with them.

It has often struck me, in opposition to what I believe is the general opinion, that at the times when we are most strictly following the stern suggestions of an uncompromising conscience, are we most beset by restlessness, misgivings, and doubt. It is as though to every noble effort there is attached a clog, which, whilst enhancing our merit, renders more arduous our struggle. Edgar experienced something of this to-day. He was leaving the scenes most flattering to his self-love, most satisfying to his ambition, and

wending his way to the obscure neighbourhood of Cumberland Market. He knew that he was bent upon the most charitable of errands—that he was seeking to fulfil at once the most difficult and the most noble of duties. His conscience approved—nay, suggested even a dangerous flattery: and yet was he sick—uncomfortable—at heart. He was dissatisfied, doubting, at a loss. He felt as men feel when, enervated by a vague disgust, they answer to the call of enchanting, but disennobling pleasure. There was less reason than usual for this melancholy: but with an almost unprecedented power did he acknowledge its presence. He could nowise account for it: it reminded him of the many hours of his childhood, when he had so hopelessly suffered from an unfathomable longing. He urged his horse into a trot—faster—faster—anything to outride this per-

sistent gloom. In vain. *Minæ scandunt eodem quo Dominus.* They did so in the days of Augustus—they do so still.

As he entered the house where Ada Bolton still lodged, a man, who had been standing for the last hour at the other end of the street, hailed a cab, entered it, and ordered the driver to go as fast as he could to Piccadilly.

.
.
.

Annette was sitting in her own room, still dwelling, as she had been the entire day, upon the appearance and the words of Edgar on the preceding night, when the announcement that Mr. Bingham had called roused her from her half-sweet, half-melancholy reverie. She could have excused herself with little difficulty; and everything

conspired to prompt the denial. Lord Fairfort and Frank were neither at home. She did not want to see this man—but she went. She found the visitor in a state of intense excitement.

“Hear me patiently, Miss Fairfort!” he began: “I come to redeem my promise; to offer to you proofs that he whom you love so faithfully is utterly unworthy of any woman’s, much more of your devotion.”

“Is that the only purpose of your visit? In that case, I think I may say it is already ended.” And she rose.

“Stay, Miss Fairfort! I implore you to pause. Edgar Huntingdon is at this moment in——nay, I cannot tell you all—but I can show you much. Pardon me, for uttering even this.”

“No, sir! I do not; but more you shall not utter in my presence.”

“As you wish, Miss Fairfort! I *will* seek you no more. If you prefer to love one who at the very moment I speak is a traitor, not only to you, but to virtue, do so. I came to undeceive you.” And he walked towards the door.

“O stay! no—one moment—no—go—go—yet, can you—*can* you prove this?” she said, in an agony of suppliant doubt. Instantaneously her manner changed again. “No, sir! you *cannot* prove this—this that you insinuate. I defy—I challenge you—to prove it.”

“And if I *can* prove it?”

“That matters not, sir! I say you *cannot* prove it.”

“Yes, Miss Fairfort;” it was Bingham’s turn to be calm. “I can—and will.”

“When? How?”

“Now, if you will come with me.”

Yes, she would go. It was false—false as he who uttered it—false as the demon who prompted him. Yes; she would go. One man more at least should know how much she loved Edgar; ay, and with what noble reason.

“I will return, sir, immediately.” And she left the room.

Exultant joy flashed athwart Bingham’s countenance.

“I have him now!” he muttered; “it must be so. A fellow does not go into a house in such a neighbourhood as that, with what are called—what rot!—good intentions. He generally stops a long time; he’s sure to be there, if Miss Fairfort would only be quick.”

She returned.

“I am ready.”

“Drive to that address,” he said. “I

will be there to receive you, and will accomplish the rest. There is no risk."

"I did not ask, sir, if there was," she said, proudly. "I trust in God, not in you. I will go to this address, and shall expect you."

.
.

Edgar was sitting on the sofa in the little room in Augustus-street, reading a new critique upon his poem, and gently rocking a cradle, within which an infant lay slumbering; for Ada was a mother now; she had just gone into the inner, her own private room. There was a knock.

"Come in," said Edgar. The door opened. He raised his eyes, and to his amazement beheld Annette Fairfort and Edward Bingham!

Did the maiden's faith falter, did her spirit shrink, did her lips pale, as she looked upon that sleeping babe? I know not. She stood there, mute. As for Bingham, his whole frame trembled with a delicious sense of vengeance. To the very last he had not, in his heart, believed that Edgar was guilty of what he had accused him to Miss Fairfort. He much feared that all his patience, and all his hopes, and his triumph, in persuading her to be a witness of her lover's crimes, would only somehow demonstrate still further that lover's virtue. Now, the fears all vanished; it was plain. Thank Heaven! Edgar Huntingdon was in reality what he had said. The cradle there, and its little inmate, were witnesses irrefragable. He began in a haughty, exulting tone:—

“ I have come, sir, to expose your conduct

to her who has been sadly too faithful to one utterly unworthy."

"Indeed, sir! And in what way?"

"Do you dare ask, with that child as your accuser?"

Though a blush of intensest shame rolled across Annette's face, she would not take her eyes from Edgar's. Verily, I think she trusted in him still, though she could not see her way. His countenance flushed with fearful passion; it was the first time she had ever seen it there.

"Cease, sir! or I will hurl you from the room. Insult me, if you will: insult *her*, by Heaven, you shall not! Annette, I do not understand this; will *you* explain?"

At this moment, the inner door gently opened. Ada, hearing the sound of voices, came into the room. No sooner had she crossed the threshold than she uttered a

shrill, sudden, piercing shriek, as if her very heart were torn asunder—a shriek such as I think was never heard before even on this earth of woe—and fell heavily and utterly senseless to the ground. Bingham turned hastily as to the door; Edgar rushed towards it too, turned the lock, and took out the key.

“I know not why you came here,” he said. “You came for your own pleasure you shall stay for mine.”

And what did Annette? Her face was buried in her hands. No shriek came from her, but a low, pitiful, unchanging wail, as though, in the flash of an instant she had been transformed into the incarnation of every grief and every agony since grief and agony first began. Suddenly, she rushed towards Ada, who lay by the cradle, stunned and motionless.

“Ada! Ada!—cousin—darling—Ada—it is I—it is Annette! Ada, Ada! pet! wake—wake! Don’t you know me? Ada! sweetest, wake—wake!”

She did wake at last, and looked around her. Her eyes fell upon Bingham.

“That—that man,” she cried, convulsively. “Take him—take him away! Annette—Mr. Huntingdon, it is—oh, take him! Baby!—my baby!” And she leaped up wildly, and snatched her yet sleeping babe from the cradle into her arms. It woke, and began joining its little cries to those of its distracted mother. This restored her consciousness. She soothed the awakened infant, burying her own face in the folds of its tiny robes. Annette had ceased her wailing; the look of anxious doubt—the look turned towards Edgar—which she had worn on first entering the room, had returned to

her; she stood, with the blush transfusing her beautiful countenance, mute and motionless. Bingham tried to look indifferent; examined his boots, and played at his cane. All this time Edgar had stood with folded arms, observant and watchful. He had marked Bingham's exulting eye and insolent demeanour; had noticed how suddenly, on Ada's entry, that demeanour had changed to amaze and alarm—the rush to the door, the abortive effort at self-possession; he had heard with creeping flesh that fearful shriek of Ada's, that pitiful, low wailing of Annette's; had heard, with awe-stricken ears, the one pronounce the name of "cousin," the other utter words which, wild and convulsive and incoherent as they were, pointed to Bingham as the author of all her woes; he had seen, with a trembling anxiety, first the faith of her whom yet he loved so wildly, then her

doubts, then her utter despair, and now again her reassurance; and he thought he saw his way.

“Annette,” he said, quietly, “you called her cousin. Is she such to you?”

“Yes!”

“The cousin you once—once spoke to me of?”

“Yes; Ada Fairfort!”

He went up to the young mother.

“Ada, you must be calm now. Put back the child into the cradle; it sleeps again.” His voice seemed to soothe her, even as her voice soothed the startled babe. She had been so accustomed to obey him, that she obeyed him now.

“You showed me a letter,” he continued, “that night I first met you. I told you to keep it; have you done so?”

“Yes.”

“Get it me.”

She gave it to him.

“Yes, this is it.”

He read it aloud : —

“By the time you receive this I shall be far away. If you choose to waste your time in bootless pursuit, do so. You must already have discovered the uselessness of trying to prove what does not exist. If you take the trouble to consider, you will perceive that you cannot even prove that I have ever seen you. Do as you will, but you will only thus reap one more penalty for your obstinacy, viz., publicity.

“WILLIAM BOLTON.”

“Who wrote this letter, Ada?”

“He did.”

“You hear, sir?” said Edgar, holding it out to Bingham.

“Indeed, it is very like my writing.”

“No, sir, it is not! I am aware that it is a feigned hand, but still yours.”

Bingham laughed coarsely.

“You are a clever fellow, Huntingdon! you always were; but you are a cleverer fellow even than I take you for if you can prove that to be my writing.”

“Merciful heavens!” Ada broke out wildly, “he denies it! Oh, Annette! he wrote it—he wrote it! Oh, if you will not believe this—if you will not believe that I too am innocent, am guiltless, have been wronged—at least believe that Mr. Huntingdon, whom you so strangely seem to know, has been to me nothing more than a messenger from heaven, a saving angel, who was sent to snatch me from worse than

death; has tended me, nursed me, taught me to be good; been gentle to my child as to me, when he whom I believed to be my husband—that, that man, William Bolton—deserted me, leaving me to die—I use his own word—to rot! Oh, but Mr. Huntingdon, let him go—make him go! he has been here too long! Send him—send him away!”

“A pretty story!” said Bingham, with a sneer, “and well told. There is one flaw in it, though. Unfortunately, my name is not Bolton.”

“Not Bolton? Oh, Mr. Huntingdon, protect me—preserve me! What fresh deceit, what new cruelty is this? I swear it is he, if there is a God in heaven! But, let him, let him go! Send him away, I cannot, cannot bear it!”

“Patience, Ada!” again said Edgar’s

soothing voice; "you never told me the name of the place where you fancied you were married.

"It was a small village called—Afre!"

"Afre!" exclaimed Annette and Edgar, simultaneously.

"Yes; do you know it?"

Neither answered, but Annette looked anxiously at the calm face of the young poet, from whose every lineament flashed the vividest and most awakened intelligence.

"Do you remember," he asked, hastily, "what day it was?"

"The 30th of May."

"The day we were at Afre!" Annette exclaimed.

"Exactly. And I took you to see an old woman who kept donkeys?"

Edgar spoke to her as though Time—cruel Time—had made no chasm between

“then” and “now.” Annette at once answered :

“Indeed I do ; and I recollect her telling us that she had been at a wedding, not of any Afrel people, but of strangers ; and — I remember all.”

“Enough !” said Edgar. “Now, sir,” turning to Bingham, “you have some idea of the testimony I can bring to bear : you see I do not hide it. Do as you think best. Acknowledge your villany ! or, deny it, and I will hunt for evidence the world through, and the law shall do the rest. Choose.”

“Ha, ha ! Very likely. You are a bigger fool than I thought was possible. Believe that girl ! You are mad. Please to unlock this door, or I will kick it open. Pretty evidence, indeed ! I believe, Huntingdon, you are studying for the bar ? Very noble profession. How much will you take for

your proofs? Why, you couldn't convict even poor Bolton, whoever he is, on such evidence, much less your humble servant. Come, open this door!"

The trembling girls feared for the consequences of this insolent speech; but to their surprise and intense gratitude, Edgar opened the door, and merely said, as Bingham passed out—

"There is a God in heaven, and vengeance will yet overtake you!"

"Yes, Edgar Huntingdon; and there is Edward Bingham on earth, and vengeance will yet overtake *you*!"

And he was gone.

It was plain enough now. The young, beautiful, wronged mother—but not wife—was the little creature of whom Annette had spoken, that autumn afternoon, during the farewell walk at Fairfort, daughter of the

silent old man who had married beneath him, whose death Edgar had read of in Paris, and for whom Ada had put on mourning. Little thought Bingham when he bid Annette Fairfort witness Edgar's guilt he was bidding her go and visit her—and, it would seem, by him — so foully-injured cousin. Great God of heaven ! verily earth is Thy footstool !

Annette approached Edgar with a strange timidity.

“Forgive me,” she said ; “and oh ! believe me when I tell you that I came here to prove to him, and to all, that you were innocent : not that he might prove to me that you were guilty. *I* never doubted till that one moment when Ada entered. I was wild with grief—with terror. We all knew that she had left her home, and knew no more. Pardon me—Oh, pardon me !—if, at

the instant of so strangely meeting her, Fear obstructed Faith. It was but an instant, and no more. Edgar! *do* you pardon me?"

"What have I to pardon? No, no, Annette, it was God who brought you here. It is all very strange—very, very strange. Explain to Ada how I know you. Of course I never till now knew her by any name but that of Ada Bolton. Can you not take her with you? Very well, do so. I must now leave you. I shall go to Afrel as soon as possible. Watch over your poor cousin. I have so far done the little I could do to comfort her. Sadly has she suffered: shamefully has she been wronged. I trust faithfully in God, as I have ever trusted. Do you likewise."

He embraced them both; bent over the cradle, kissed the child, and hurried away.

CHAPTER XV.

“Went down the vale of years.”—*Childe Harold*.

“Universal darkness covers all!”—POPE.

EDGAR was driving along the high road that leads to Afrel. He was about eight miles distant from the village, and had passed Bingham's seat, Ashford Hall, about half an hour ago. Though he himself held the reins, he was not unaccompanied. After leaving Annette and Ada Fairfort, he had at once sought Woofinden, whom of all his acquaintance he thought best qualified to assist him in his search for testimony upon

which so much depended. Fortunately, Woofinden was as willing as he was able to render the desired aid. They had missed the first train by which they might have travelled, by about ten minutes, and were consequently detained in London some hours. On arriving at the station from which they would be obliged to drive to Afrel, another mishap beset them. All the vehicles, and they were not many, of the place had been engaged about half an hour before, and gone off in different directions. It was after midnight. What was to be done? At last a gig, belonging to a farmer close by, was got hold of, and in this Edgar and Woofinden started at once for Afrel.

“So, Betty Nestfield was your nurse?” said Edgar. “How strange! She was one of my first acquaintances as a child. But you have always been so secretive: you

never mention yourself, and I am sure you have a history."

"Perhaps it might be called one," replied Woofinden, "though it is very brief, and has about it no mystery, as you seem to believe, and very little interest either. Such as it is, you may have it. When I was younger than you, I was perhaps even more ambitious. I rather fancy that this simple old woman, whom we are going to see, first fostered this tendency. Be that as it may, at twenty I resolved to be somebody—at twenty-two I tried. But, meanwhile, a further incentive to ambition arose. I loved, as the phrase is, above me, rather."

"As I have done," sighed Edgar.

"As you have done," continued Woofinden pitilessly, to all appearance. "But unlike you, I had then very little to live upon but the fruits of my own exertions: and while

your ambition is literary success, my aims were the artist's. I said that I loved; it is perhaps more necessary to state that I was loved in return. I had splendid day-dreams, and with her I shared them; for she was not so far my social superior that we were not often thrown together. I was to be a great man: then, would she give me her hand, as I had already gained her heart. Months of patient labour, but steadfast faith, passed away. The time came—I had finished my first great picture. It was exhibited: a few days after the leading review noticed it. I seized the page with eagerness: I read it, and my hopes were shattered. It not only censured; it ridiculed—it jeered—it laughed aloud. All was over. I withdrew my picture. Some one offered to buy it—I refused. My friends told me that I was a sensitive fool—a coward; one of them said

that he could prove to me that the notice had been written by a private enemy. Were this true, it only made further attempt more futile: for if animosity can thus damage merit, why struggle? I went my way, and never again approached her whom I loved so—I could not face her—I was unworthy. *She* does not know it; but *I* do—have known some years now, that her husband is the man who wrote that review, and wrote it when aware of my love, and determined by whatever means to be my successful rival. That is all. Since then I have lived in obscurity, without any aim beyond repose, finding thus at least a refuge from calumny and hate.”

Edgar did not answer. He felt that to argue in favour of a system from which, however generally pure, the person, whom he would have won over to different views,

had so seriously suffered, would have been as cruel as it would have been useless. The consequences of that one treachery no one could thoroughly fathom. Perhaps, the world had lost a great artist; society, certainly, a tender philanthropist. Edgar understood now those bitter sneers to which he had so often been compelled to listen; those savage taunts; those earnest warnings against the class which sits in judgment upon those who strive. He would change the theme.

“See!” he said; “we are gaining upon that carriage once more. It has been before us all the way.”

“Now, we lose it again. It is off at a tearing pace.”

It was, to use a Danish phrase, as dark as a wolf’s mouth. Edgar knew the road—every winding, every turn, every descent—

by heart, or he could not have safely urged his horse forward as he urged it now. It appeared as if, every now and then, when they gained upon the carriage in front, it made a fresh dash forward, as if unwilling to be overtaken.

“Blast it !” exclaimed a voice from within it. “Drive quicker, quicker; hang the horses ! I’ll double your money if you get me in a quarter of an hour before this trap behind : and you’ve only six miles to do it in.”

The post-boys plied spur and scourge : and our travellers saw no more of the carriage during the journey.

“It will be no use going to bed,” said Edgar ; “Afre! folks are up so early ; and we’ll go and see the old woman the first thing in the morning. Is it not dark ? I never knew such a night, this time of the

year! Do you hear the river? We run along it all the way, now—but trust to me: I'll land you safe. I should think Betty will remember the mock-marriage. The worst is she's so short-sighted—and we shall want her to swear to Bingham and this poor girl. I expect this is the reason why she was chosen witness. It was a bold thing of the villain, though: he's known in the village—must be. You know I pointed you out his place up the valley, Ashford Hall. I suppose he could best get the necessary accomplices in this neighbourhood. At any rate, if Betty can't swear to them, she will know if any other Afrel people were there."

"Probably. But the girl herself? Would she not, supposing there were other Afrel people there, be able to recognize them?"

"No, no. She told me when I first met

her, that she was too timid and excited to look up during the whole ceremony. See, we're in the village now."

There were no lights in Afrel, save over the door of the Inn at which stood, the horses taken out, the carriage they had seen in front of them, and to Edgar's surprise, in the windows of Betty Nestfield's cottage.

"How strange! Let us go at once. Here, take my arm—up hill, mind; there."

He knocked. The door was opened by one of Betty's grandchildren.

"Grandmother's ill," the girl said. "Oh, it's you, Mr. Huntingdon! I fear she's dying. She has been going on quite silly like."

They entered. The old woman lay on a bed, stretched out before the lighted fire. She had been ill some six weeks. At first

she seemed to recognize Woofinden—then Edgar—then to confuse the two—then to know neither.

“I must—must speak to her. Betty! Betty! Don’t you know me?”

“Ay; know ye, bairn?” she said in a low, indistinct voice. “Ay, that I du. I nursed ye, joy! Didn’t I? He’s t’ nicest lad iver came to Afrel, he is.”

“She is wandering,” said the village surgeon. “I fear you will not get anything from her very clearly. Is it important? I think she is dying—will be dead before morning.”

“Oh! I must speak to her. It is my only hope. Betty! Betty! Don’t you know Edgar Huntingdon? Betty! Betty!

“Ay, honey! t’ nicest lad. We niver had a differ five-and-forty year come fore-end o’ Christmas. Is Jessie in t’ stable. It’s a cold night; isn’t it, joy?”

“Yes, Betty; very cold. But don’t you remember a wedding last year in the old church, at which you were witness? The day I brought a young lady to see you.”

“Ay, ay, bairn! Married to my poor Nestfield—seven-and-fifty year come ——”

“No, Betty! not that. I mean a young girl who cried—who was married to a stranger, and you were a witness. Don’t you remember?”

“Ay, honey! I do that. A bonnie lass, wi’ blue eyes, that war kind to Jessie. Ye brought her. I remember, honey! Ay, it war sad. Ye loved her like, and the father, ay, Lord—Lord—nay, I can’t remember t’ name. Ay, bairn! I remember now—now remem—ay—my poor Nest——”

Her utterance was troubled; her lips still moved. Edgar bent down, soothingly repeating his questions. He put his ear closer,

and listened. There came no answer : he caught no breath. He turned his eyes towards her. She was dead !

He covered his face, but to shut out far more than that simple death-scene. The good old woman had died peacefully enough, but she had taken away with her an irreclaimable secret. Woofinden took his companion's arm, and led him out. As they came into the open air, Edgar said, in a fearful tone—

“ It is all over ; I cannot prove her innocence, or that rascal's guilt.”

And in the darkness immediately behind him, a fist was clenched, and lips muttered silently—

“ No, it is *not* all over ! You cannot prove that rascal's guilt ; but I will prove something before long. Come, Joe ! it's all all right, now. Now that old hag is dead,

you and I are the only two who know anything about the marriage. Only hold your tongue, and there'll always be a hundred a year for you. He mustn't see me. He has gone into the inn. Let us run over to your place, and stay there till they're off."

And the only living being, who could have proved the seducer's guilt, took the seducer's gold!

CHAPTER XVI.

“Omnes eodem cogimur : omnium
Versatur urna ; seriùs, occius
Sors exitura.”—HORACE.

“The lamentable change is from the best :
The worst returns to laughter.”—*Henry VIII.*

ON discovering, by means of Joe's inquiries, that Edgar intended to remain at Afrel, Bingham at once set off, cautiously, back again to London. When the morning broke, Edgar, together with Woofinden, sought the clergyman. The worthy pastor remembered Ada and her visit. He had instituted, and more than once renewed, every possible search which might clear up the

mystery, and always with the same result. Betty Nestfield he had never thought of questioning; and now that her name was connected with the mock-marriage, he was more puzzled than ever. It was evident that the old woman had been duped; beyond this nothing appeared. How strange! The actors in all the scenes of this deplorable tragedy had constantly trodden on each others' heels, and they knew it not. Had Bingham been aware that on the very day of the deception practised upon Ada Fairfort, her uncle, her cousins, and Edgar Huntingdon, were rambling on the Afrel hills, how different might have been the fate of that hapless girl. And had Edgar suspected whom that carriage, which had preceded him to the village, contained, and on the look out for craft discovered Bingham and his companion within a yard of Betty Nest-

field's door, on leaving the scene where she lay a corpse, how altered would have been his despondency and Bingham's triumph! They who know not Providence, may well worship Fate.

That day was spent at Afrel in vain. No clue, even the most remote, had they stumbled on. The whole village was ignorant of the occurrence. No one remembered the 30th of May especially,—no one had seen the people described. Further search was only further lost time. This was the clergyman's conclusion; this was Woodfin's; this was Edgar's. That night the travellers started for London. Edgar never spoke the whole journey. How bound up with his destiny seemed that road! From it into the world—and Struggle. From it to Glendover and Love! From it back to the unsympathizing city—and Despair! Over

it again to Afrel, seeking comfort—again away from Afrel, having found none ! Bingham had traversed it ; Ada had traversed it ; Annette had traversed it. Oh, the weary miles ! Would not the hills unfold their mighty bosoms, and whisper secrets that might prop up hearts ? Was the river saying nothing to him ? If it spoke, he understood it not. And was all to end thus ? Guilt was successful ; Innocence reft of hope ! Ada knew that she had been wronged, and that he had comforted and healed her sore wounds as best he could. Annette would believe this without proofs ; but would Lord Fairfort ? The babe—whose was it ? How could any one tell that he had known Ada only since August ? He had confided in no one, not till the close of the year, two months only before the child was born, when he had introduced the mother to the Spanish

exiles. Would the world, would any but Annette and Frank believe him?

When he reached London he parted from Woofinden, and went straightway to the Temple. He could not face Ada, he could not face Annette; more than all, he could not face Lord Fairfort. Why visit them and avow that he could not prove the girl's innocence, or his? His hands were empty. Cooper was out of town. He threw himself down in a chair, in his chambers in Garden Court, and sat there, stupified and motionless. He must have remained thus three hours. There was a knock—only the postman's. He opened the letter, which ran as follows:

“Sir,—You have been pleased to make accusations against me which I am assured amount to libel. As a lawyer, you will know something about this. Unless you at once

send me the fullest apology, of which I shall make what use I think fit, proceedings will be instituted against you.

“EDWARD BINGHAM.”

This roused him. He perceived what had escaped his observation—numerous fresh critiques of his poem—what cared he for them now?—and three or four letters. The first he took up had a black seal. He broke it.

“God in heaven!” he exclaimed, and fell back in his chair.

The letter ran thus:—

“My dear Mr. Huntingdon,—My poor father died last night. Pray come at once. I am in despair! Gratefully yours,

“CATALINA PAMPESTERRA.”

It bore the date of the previous day. The

Spaniard had been dead nearly two days, and Catalina alone ! Wildly Edgar rushed into the street, entered a cab, and was on his way to St. John's Wood. The cloud had fallen at last—a cloud darker, heavier, more resistless than that which had burst over Cooper's head two years ago ! He had never utterly despaired ; but he despaired utterly now. Oh, that he had never cherished this absurd humanity ! Oh, that he had left—no, not that—but where was he to look for light ? Another helpless girl leaning upon him—another strange relationship, for which the world would accuse and hoot him, for which Lord Fairfort—he would think no more. He arrived at the house he sought ; the blinds were down ; he rushed up stairs, into a room where tall candles were burning ; saw Pampester's dead body, Catalina's suppliant form, and sank, in the utter prostra-

tion of mental and bodily fatigue, at her feet.

His heart was breaking. The brave boy was dismayed; the consoler in many woes was utterly overpowered by his own; the sheltering wings of the good angel hung heavy and impotent by his side. He had come to offer no stay, to suggest no future, to point out no asylum; he came, cast down by the weight of his own burthen, to mingle his moanings with the orphan girl by the bed-side of her departed father. The intensity of his prostration roused Catalina to one of those generous efforts of which woman alone is capable. She veiled her own sorrow, that she might lessen his: she was the first to speak. She described her parent's death; peaceful, and apparently without pain. She said he had gone out like the dying away of faint, tremulous music, and he had blessed

her and Edgar. She had wondered at her benefactor's delay. She had sent for Ada, who came not. As she uttered the name, she saw that Edgar's pain all returned. What was it?—would he not tell her? No; not now. He could not obtrude his many griefs, in the presence of this to him consummating, and to Catalina overwhelming, misfortune. The evening wore away; and he had offered no consolation, and had found none. Night deepened. He must leave her; he must go and think, and try to be calm, in his desolate chambers. He would come again, in the early hours of the following day. Merciful God! in what quarter was Comfort hiding?

He went and sat down in Garden Court. Alas! alas! was it all to end thus? All the aspirations of humanity, all the fervid yearnings of a benevolent ambition, all the patient watchings of an unchanging and

still believing love ; were they all to terminate in utter, hopeless failure? Had he not too much trusted to himself? Had he not fallen into the great sin of his age—a haughty self-reliance, purely human, without an adequate acknowledgment of complete dependence on another and a Supreme Promoter? He was forced to avow that he *had* over-estimated his own impotent energies—and he humbled himself. And in that act of self-abasement, faith seemed to return. He thought of Cooper and *his* sorrows, and his despair, and his miraculous God-wrought restoration ; and he would await the morrow, and trusted to discover, if not hope, at least resignation. He would retire to rest—he would try to sleep.

As he entered his bedroom, there was a knock at the outer door. It was strange—for it was more than an hour past mid-

night. He undid the bolts and looked out. A boy, with anything but a London air, stood before him. The face he had seen before, he was sure: where, he could not recollect; for his faculties, what with anxiety, what with fatigue, were not in a very lucid state.

“Don’t you know me, Mr. Huntingdon? Don’t you remember Allan?” said the lad.

“Oh, yes! of course. Come in—come in.”

It was the enthusiastic young cricketer, who had been the indirect cause of Edgar’s once leaving Afrel.

“Sit down. But what ever brings you up to London?—and here, too, at this time of night?”

“Why, you see, sir, I thought I’d best come at once. Weren’t you at Afrel, Tuesday night?”

“ Yes, and all Wednesday. What of it ? ”

“ Well, you must know—shortly after you left us—that time, you remember, when we was playing cricket, and that man came to strike me, and you was so kind to me, sir—a year since ? ”

“ Yes. Well ? ”

“ Shortly after that I went to take care of Betty Nestfield’s donkeys altogether ; which I’ve done this nearly a year, now, happen. You know she died t’other night.”

“ Yes, the night I was there.”

“ Yes, I saw you coming out o’ t’ cottage.”

“ Out of the cottage ! Why, it was two o’clock in the morning.”

“ Yes, I know that right enough. You see, as I said, I take charge of Betty’s donkeys, and sleep in t’ same stables like they

do — right agin t' house. There's a gate between 'em."

"Yes—I know it well."

"Well, I warn't sleepy that night a bit. I knowed poor old Betty was dying; and I'd just been into t' cottage, and just comed out, and war leaning agin t' stable-door t' other side o' t' gate, crying about the old woman, when you comed."

Edgar began to be all attention. Oh, if comfort were really about to dawn!

"I couldn't make you out, only I knowed your voice at once; there was somebody with you?"

"Yes; well?"

"Well, I saw you both go into t' cottage. You'd hardly shut t'door when two other men came and stood right behind t'porch, by t' gate, but t'other side to that I war on. Beside, I war hid by t' posts of t' stable-door;

and you know it war such a dark night that if I hadn't been, they happen wouldn't have seen me ; so I stood there, and heard all they said. One on 'em was a gentleman ; t' other was Joe Summersgill—t' man whose donkeys I used to keep, t' same as wanted to beat me that time you wouldn't let him. Well, when you comed out, I heard you say to t' gentleman who war with you, 'It's all ower—I can't prove;' and then I heard no more. And when ye two went down t' hillock ower to t' inn, Joe and t' gentleman who war with him, began talking, and I heard t' gentleman say to Joe, 'It's all right, Joe ! Now t' old woman's dead, you and me's t' only two who know aught about this marriage. Only hold your tongue, and I'll give ye a hundred a year.' Well, you see, I thought somehow, from this, it war summut you wanted to know like. I war away from Afrel

all t' next day—that's yesterday : but when I got home, I heard how t' parson and you had been going about, asking about some marriage. Well, I said nought to nobody but Betty Nestfield's daughter Ann, who lent me t' money to come up here with, when I told her I wanted to come to see you on summut that'd do you good. And so you see I'm here."

Edgar was speechless. The words would not come. He could neither find language to thank this boy, nor utterance wherewith to proffer gratitude to Heaven. But the lad could tell, by the light of those bright, sparkling, almost dazzling eyes, that he had come with his simple story not in vain. And, oh ! God, who recks not much whether or not our lips tremble with acknowledgment and thanksgiving for His supreme beneficent bounty, stooped down benignly, accepting,

as fragrant incense, the mute confession of
His infinitely miraculous goodness from the
poet's silent, but exulting heart !

CHAPTER XVII.

“Raro antecedentem scelestum
Deseruit pede Pæna claudo.”

HORACE.

“Farewell! a word that must be, and hath been—
A word that makes us linger—yet, farewell.”

Childe Harold.

IN the library of Lord Fairfort's house in Piccadilly were assembled his Lordship, Frank, Annette, Ada, and Edgar Huntingdon. Our hero had arrived but a moment ago, and stood at the window, impatiently looking at his watch, and turning towards the door at the slightest sound. As yet,

nothing but mute and for the most part strangely constrained salutations had passed. Edgar had written to claim this visit as of right: it had at once been granted. The Fairforts had no idea what might be its exact purport—merely that it was someway connected with Ada and her alleged betrayal. The poor girl was weeping gently, Annette soothing her; his Lordship reading the paper, and looking sceptical and annoyed; Frank, restless and uneasy. The door opened.

“Mr. Bingham!”

He entered with a look of satisfied triumph. Edgar turned: and his face was so pale and stern that Annette shuddered.

“I received your note,” he began at once.
“It runs thus:—

“‘You have been pleased to make accusations against me which I am assured amount

to libel. As a lawyer, you will know something about this. Unless you at once send me the fullest apology, of which I shall make what use I think fit, proceedings will be instituted against you.' You wrote that?"

"Certainly. I am glad you received it. I conclude you asked me to come here in order to make the necessary apology. I am ready to accept it."

Edgar seemed as though he did not hear the words which Bingham uttered. He opened another letter and again read aloud:—

" 'By the time you receive this I shall be far away. If you choose to waste your time in useless pursuit, do so. You must already have discovered the uselessness of trying to prove what does not exist. If you take the trouble to consider, you will perceive that you cannot even prove I have ever seen you. Do as you will—but you will only thus reap

one more penalty of your obstinacy.' Here, Ada!"

She crept gently up to him: he sheltered her little shrinking form with his extended arm. Some girls, had they been in Annette's position, would have surely felt a sensation akin to jealousy: but not so she—she took courage rather. Bingham at first changed colour. If fear had caused it originally, a well-assumed anger at least usurped the semblance of its source, as he exclaimed,

"What on earth do you mean by this infernal rhodomontade? I tell you what, I am not going to have my time and my patience interfered with by such dramatic absurdity as this. You'll be reading us one of your poems next."

Edgar took no notice of the offensive sneers, adding, simply and slowly,

"Then you deny having written that letter to this—this girl?"

"I denied it days ago: and I am not going to be insulted by the mere reproduction of such a—for anything I know—forged document as that. Plainly, Edgar Huntingdon! will you apologize, or will you not?"

"Let him go!" whispered Ada, audibly, and with pitiable tremor.

"*Let me! Ha, ha! How very good! I am going!*"

"No, sir! you are not!" said Edgar, firmly, his whole tone and manner transformed; as, to the astonishment of everybody, he went up to the bell, and, without asking permission, rang it. "I thought I would offer you once more a chance of avowing your guilt, and repenting it. I see there is nothing left but for me to prove it. Yes, sir! prove it! Yes, my Lord, prove

it! Yes, Ada!—well, you had rather go!—do so, poor child!”

She had just quitted the room, when a servant re-opened the door, and admitted a heavy, skulking, hang-dog-looking fellow, who shambled in with an air of commingled rascality, conscious guilt, and assured security. Two or three hours after Allan had called in Garden Court, and related his simple but important story, Edgar had sent him back, accompanied by a detective officer, to Afrel. Joe Summersgill had been readily discovered, as he was still in the village; relying with perfect fearlessness upon Bingham's assurance that they were the only two who now knew anything of the false marriage. But no sooner was he brought face to face with his unexpected accusers, and promised full pardon would he only add against the main offender the damning weight of his

evidence, but immediate apprehension and consequent trial should he refuse, than his courage forsook him, and he consented to appear as a witness rather than an accomplice. Description of the transformation which, on his entry, came over Edward Bingham, were impossible. The villain's face lost all its resemblance to that of a living man, save that his eyes travelled wildly round the room for hope, and saw none. His whole frame trembled with the sense of the terrible fate which had so suddenly, on the mere opening of a door, burst upon him. Vainly he tried to reassume anger—to counterfeit passion—to pretend contempt. He felt that one whom, however much he might hate, he knew well and feared most of any man on earth, had him now in his clutches, and would not let him go. So there he stood, awaiting his execu-

tioner's words. I think if that moment had been the only retribution, he had been fully amerced !

" You remember the thirtieth of May, last year ?" Edgar asked the countryman.

" Yes, sir !"

" You remember on that day a pretended marriage at Afrel, in which you took part, and that fellow there was the mock husband ?"

" Yes, sir !"

" You could recognize the young lady who was the victim of your concocted villany ?"

" Yes, sir !"

" You are ready to swear to all this in a court of justice ?"

" Yes, sir !"

" Very well, you can leave the room."

Lord Fairfort and Frank simultaneously rushed towards the trembling culprit. Edgar

hurried to interpose between him and the terribly threatened violence. Fortunately, the father, overcome by the very intensity of his rage, tottered in his hasty steps, and fell back powerless on the sofa. Frank he was in time to catch hold of, and keep back.

“You in — infern — fernal dog!” exclaimed the infuriated young man, his utterance choked by his swollen rage, “I will horsewhip you — through — through — Eu — Europe!”

“Frank! Frank! I pray you be calmer! You will undo all. Yet one moment. Now, sir!” turning on Bingham, “do you confess?”

“Why — why — you — you see,” he answered, almost unable to bring out the craven words, “that — that — you — you have — such — such evidence — it’s a — a con — conspiracy

—I mean you—have such—such evidence, that—that—” more he could not say.

“Just so,” said Edgar. “That is exactly how we stand. Your confession is of very little importance to any one but yourself. The whole affair is too plain. I suppose you are not too blind to see what, upon such evidence, Justice can do with you. But this I will not press, upon one condition—that you sell all your property in this country and leave it for ever. You stand before me as much a condemned culprit as though the judges of the land had declared it. I refer not to your persistent and groundless enmity to me, except to point out how it alone has punished you. I do not wish to drag noble names into the disrepute of having been contaminated by the mere coupling with yours—that is all; but if you do not carry out the alternative I offer, to the letter, I

will drag every illustrious name in Europe before the world, sooner than you shall escape the punishment due to your heartless rascality. Speak, sir !”

“ I—I—will—give—give money. I will—will marry her !”

“ Marry her !” thundered out Frank. “ Marry her ! you contemptible, scoundrelly hound ! I WILL speak ! Open that door !” Edgar ceased to interpose. “ Now, then, you infernal dog !”

He seized the shaking coward with a giant’s grasp, dragged him across the room, along the hall, tore open the door, kicked him down the steps into Piccadilly, and left him.

The necessity for resolve was over, and the weakest there was Edgar Huntingdon. He went back to his place at the window, and leaned his head upon his arm, for the

tears were falling. But he did not long remain thus. A delicate little hand took hold of his—it was Ada's. She had silently returned.

“Come with me!” she said, with her soft voice.

She led him towards Annette, and then both of them to Lord Fairfort. The proud old man was brought low enough now; verily his humility was pitiful to see.

“Forgive me, children,” he said; “forgive me! Heaven bless you, Mr. Huntingdon! Heaven bless you!”

.
.

I must fain bring my story—oh, that, dearest reader! you may have had a thousandth part the pleasure in reading, that, I thank God devoutly, I have had in writing it!—to a close. The multifarious London

chimes toll out the half-hour after six of this last February morning, as I pen these final pages. Bear with me a little longer; for though we are beginning to tread upon the days that are, I must needs paint one picture more.

Two years gone, and it is again the fourteenth of June. Edgar is sitting before an open window, that looks out upon as sweet and secluded a sanctuary of Nature as ever made a fond poet-worshipper happy. He is in his own home, and that of her who was once Annette Fairfort. Though he has never been called to the Bar, and has now no intention of seeking that distinction, he does not regret the many, many months—some sadly dreary—which he spent in King's Bench Walk. He says that they disciplined his mind, which he makes out to have been a very disordered and diseased one. He

has, avowedly, enlisted in the greatest of all corps—in the glorious ranks of literature. She is his other mistress. He ought to be writing now, it would seem: he fancies that he is; but the pen moves not, nor the hand which holds it listlessly. He gazes outwards upon the garden, and dallies with the past.

Lord Fairfort is running over the green grass-plot after a tender little maiden, who has not yet seen the completion of her third year. His Lordship doats upon the child. She calls him, in her yet imperfect utterance, grandpapa, and seldom leaves him. When the tears gather in his eyes, as they do not unoften, she brushes them away, and kisses him, though she knows not whence they come, only that he is sad, and she would not have him so. Her mother was the pretty delicate little creature who tremblingly followed Edgar with the lost letter from the

Duke of York's column to Garden Court, that odd night when he stood staring at the moon. Ada had been taken home under the roof of Edgar and Annette. These young married people had nothing from her ; she was the quiet reflection of both. There was no jealousy, no difference ; nothing but the simplest, most unwary love. One morning, thinking their dear sister, so they always called her, unusually late in coming down stairs, they crept gently together to the room. The infant was trying to awake its mother ; striving, with its tiny fingers, to open the sleeper's eyes. But the young mother was—no, not dead !—she had glided imperceptibly into Heaven ! Angels had come for her in the silence of the night, and had taken her away ; bearing upon their golden wings this long-suffering saint to a land far off—unseen, but existent,

surely—where no hurt, no touch of sorrow should come near her more. And from that spiritual home she fondly watches over him and his, who, when she was wandering, sheltered her so well.

Catalina and Frank are walking up and down the most secluded avenue in Edgar's moderate estate. The orphan girl retains her superb beauty. For some time after her poor father's death, it had threatened to abandon her; but Sorrow, after all, is seldom else but gentle with the young: and if she seem, for a moment, to tread recklessly on the tenderest shoots, it is that she may invest them, when she removes her footstep, with a more consummate grace! She is, of course, one of Edgar's household. I venture to predict, that before very long—though I own I have not been made a confidant in this matter—she will be the mistress of her

own. And a worse fate might befall the noble house of Fairfort, than being enriched with the grace, the blood, and the virtues of the last of the Pampesteras.

Arthur Laughnan begged of Edgar to ask him to this 14th of June *réunion*: for he knew that Florence would be of the party. He is as wild—I am forced to add, as hopelessly wild—after his pretty cousin as ever. To this day, he thinks that she took an unfair advantage of his affections that famous night in Paris, on the occasion of the benefit of our sprightly friend, Mademoiselle Ninon, who, be it said by the way, is increasing her reputation, has quite forgiven Monsieur Chasseloup, and is in fact married to him. To return: Arthur writes his own verses now, and shocking bad ones they are. He pretends to be amusing himself with the dogs. Likely enough, Master Arthur!

Everybody sees that you are watching Florence—she, as well as the rest of us.

She is sitting, on a long wooden garden-chair, between Annette and Horace Cooper. A smart lad walks across the lawn: he has come in from the post-office of the village. It is Allan. He gives the newspaper to Cooper, who is soon buried in its contents: for he is readily amused now. There are no letters.

“But why can you not love the boy?” Annette asks Florence. She is more convinced than ever that love ought to be Jove supreme. “I am sure he is a dear fellow; he is handsome, a thorough gentleman, clever, and not much younger than you are. Can’t you give him hope?”

“My dear Annette! I never loved but one person; and that person was he who is now—your husband. Of course I have no

such feeling now, but I shall never so love any one again, but you and Horace there. There, now!" and she pressed her friend's hand. Cooper looked up and said,

"You remember Edward Bingham? He is dead."

"Dead!"

"Yes—murdered—abroad—by a woman, it is supposed. It is not a very edifying story—but it is there. Don't tell Edgar." And he handed the paper.

At that moment, the sound of horses' hoofs was heard. Presently, the further gate swung open.

"It is Mr. Woofinden—I will go and let Edgar know."

The young poet was still in dreamland. A figure bent over him fondly—gentle hands put back his hair caressingly—gentle lips kissed his forehead.

"Do I disturb you, Edgar?"

"No, pretty one! you know you never do."

"Mr. Woofinden is here—has just come."

"Let us go to him then."

She took up the still blank papers.

"What have you been doing? I thought you were writing, or I should have come to you long ago."

"I have only been thinking: thinking how very—very blest we are—blest even out of proportion to what we have suffered."

"Yes, so we are: it is most true. Ah! it was well you were a poet, or you would never have borne so bravely, or triumphed so nobly."

"According to that doctrine, I know some one else who must be a poet too."

"I know whom you mean," she answered, with an affectionate smile. "Well, Edgar!

I hope I am a poet—at least in feeling. I shall thus nearest resemble you. And let the world repeat, as it will, its hereditary prejudices; but the real poet is the most practical of men!”

“And when, my pretty lover of paradoxes! is the world going to be of your opinion?”

“When it knows *you*. You have already fully proved it.”

“Not yet, Annette! not yet.”

Not yet! Orthodox fables used to conclude with three or four lines, carefully headed, “Moral.” I would not imitate them: but oh, how much long, weary weeping might be saved us, if we only faced our troubles with this manly, upright, careless greeting: Not yet! I pretend to no superior sanctity; but we are all good and wise when we mount the pulpit: and I am a preacher for the nonce.

There are times—why not frankly own it?—when our chances look as bad as bad can be—when there seems no way out of the long, pitiless labyrinth of life—and when the best thing we can do is to sicken, sit down, and die. Out on it! The very worst woes that ever happen us, or bring about the heaviest heart-ache, very gentle angels are smiling at, much as you smile at Amy's broken toy or Rosie's tangled skipping-rope. The wildly-desired project of to-day is either the accomplished purpose, or the talked-over, laughed-at absurdity of to-morrow. Were all our grand schemes to turn out successful, what an unfortunate set of wretches should we be! And—I hope I speak not irreverently—I could not bring myself to thank God for existence, if it were not beset by those struggles, in combating—and let us hope sometimes con-

quering—which, we experience the rapture of Triumph or comprehend the sublimity of Endurance.

THE END.

NEW WORKS

PUBLISHED BY

J. F. HOPE,

16, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET, LONDON.

In 1 vol., post 8vo, price 10s. 6d. (Early in June.)

The Adventures of Mrs. Colonel Somerset in Caffraria during the War at the Cape. Edited by I. E. Fenton.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

In 1 vol., post 8vo, price 8s. (In the press.)

Traces of Primitive Truth, &c., &c., &c. A Manual for Missions. By the Rev. John Lockhart Ross, M.A. Oxon., Vicar of Avebury-cum-Winterbourne, Monkton, Wilts, Author of "The Church and the Civil Power," "Letters on Secession to Rome," &c., &c., &c.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 3s. 6d. (Now ready.)

Preaching, Prosing, and Puseyism, with other Peas of the Pod. By Feltham Burghley, Author of "Sonnets" and "Sir Edwin Gilderoy."

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 2s. (In June.)

The Rifle Catechism ; or, the Philosophy of the Rifle. By Cecil Stone, Esq., 77th Regiment, Author of "The Privateer," "Aslané," &c.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 10s. 6d. (In the press.)

A Gallop to the Antipodes : returning overland through India, &c. By John Shaw, M.D., F.G.S., F.L.S., Author of "A Tramp to the Diggings," "A Ramble through the United States," "Recollections of Travel," &c.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

In 1 vol., post 8vo, price 7s. 6d. (Early in June.)

The Privateer. By C. Stone, Esq., 77th
Regiment, Author of the "Rifle Catechism."
London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 2s. (Now ready.)

Aslané. A Tale of the Massacre of the Nestorian Christians. By Enos.
London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

In 1 vol., price 3s. (In the press.)

Sermons and Lectures delivered in a Country Church. By the Rev. W. J. Hathway, B.A.
London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

NEW WORK BY MRS. ROBERT CARTWRIGHT.

Now ready, in 2 vols., double post, price £1 1s.

The Royal Sisters; or, Pictures of a Court.
By Mrs. R. Cartwright, Author of "Lamia," "Christabelle,"
"Ambrose the Sculptor," &c. &c.
London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

In 2 vols., large 8vo, price 10s.

The Theocratic Philosophy of English History,
Showing the Rise and Progress of the British Empire. In
which the events of history are traced to their proper origin,
the characters of persons whose actions have influenced
the progress of society delineated, and the overruling providence
of God vindicated.

"In this age of ephemeral publications, seldom does it fall to the lot of a reviewer to enjoy the privilege of calling public attention to a work of such profound research, written in such powerful and concise language, and presenting the result of years of patient investigation of an almighty power unravelling the entangled web of human affairs. If to justify the ways of God to man—if to exhibit Divine benevolence educing ultimate good out of apparent evil; making 'the wrath of man to praise him,' and overruling every event to subserve the grand designs of Providence; if such an attempt, executed by an author possessing in combination mental powers of no common order, has long been a desideratum, we are enabled to announce the completion of a task which will continue an imperishable memorial of the talent, and genius, and perseverance of Mr. Schomberg."—*Church Intelligencer.*

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

In 1 vol., double post, price 10s. 6d. (Ready.)

The Life and Times of Dante.

By R. De Vericour, Professor of Languages and Literature in the Queen's University, Cork.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, 1 vol., price 2s. (Cheap Second Edition.)

Ernest Milman : A True Tale of Manchester

Life. By P. Oswyn, Author of "Ralph Deane," &c.

"This work will doubtless be eagerly sought after."—*Manchester Spectator*.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

DR. PUSEY REFUTED.

In post 8vo, 4s. cloth. (Ready.)

The Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist Investigated : Modern Innovations of its Purity Examined and brought to the test of Scripture, the Testimony of the Ancient Fathers, and the Declarations of the Church of England. By the Rev. John Duff Schomberg, B.A., Vicar of Polesworth.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

In 1 vol., post 8vo, price 10s. 6d. (Now Ready.)

The Odd Confidant ; or, " Handsome is that Handsome Does." By Dot.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

In 2 vols., post 8vo, price 21s. (Now ready.)

The House of Camelot. A Tale of the Olden Time. By Miss M. Linwood.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Just published, Vol. I., price 7s. 6d.; Vol. II., price 10s. 6d. Beautifully Illustrated.

History and Antiquities of Roxburghshire and Adjacent Districts, from the most remote period to the present time. By Alexander Jeffrey, Esq., Author of "Guide to Antiquities of the Borders," &c.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 5s. (Second Edition.)

Travels and Recollections of Travel; with a Chat upon various subjects. By Dr. J. Shaw, Author of "Rambles through the United States," "A Tramp to the Diggings," &c.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

STARTLING NEW WORK.

Vol. I., post 8vo, price 5s. (Second Edition.)

Holland: its Institutions, Press, Kings, and Prisons; with an awful Exposure of Court Secrets and Intrigues. By E. Meeter.

"This is just the book that people would like to read."—*Saturday Review*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

1 vol., post 8vo, price 10s. 6d. (Early in June.)

Juvenile Crime: Its Causes, Character, and Cure. By S. P. Day, Author of "Monastic Institutions," &c.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Lately published, in 1 vol., post 8vo, price 2s. 6d., cloth 3s. 6d.

China: a Popular History, with a Chronological account of the most remarkable events from the earliest period to the present day. By Sir Oscar Oliphant, Kt.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 4s. (Ready.)

Wild Notes. By E. Passingham.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Second Edition, Second Series, now ready, price 6s. 6d.

Brameld's Practical Sermons. (Second series.)

"Full of earnest thought and genial feeling."—*Athenæum*.

"A book of a thousand merits."—*Press*.

"The claims of personal religion are enforced with singular earnestness."—*John Bull*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Ready, Second Edition, much improved, price 6s.

Thirty-four Practical Sermons.

By G. W. Brameld, M.A. Oxon, Vicar of East Markham,
late Curate of Mansfield.

"Truly spiritual."—*John Bull*.

"Brief, earnest, and forcible."—*English Churchman*.

"These discourses are truly what they are termed in the title-page, practical. Mr. Brameld does not command belief, he persuades and convinces."—*Critic*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Just published, price 7s. 6d.

Thirty Sermons, on Jonah, Amos, and Hosea.

By the Rev. W. Drake, M.A., Lecturer of St. John Baptist Church, Coventry; Hebrew Examiner in the University of London; and late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Just published, price 6d.

The Prophecy of Koshru, &c. Translated by J. D., and Edited by M.D.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Just published, price 4d.

Christian Fear. A Sermon preached by desire of the Congregation. By John Barton, Curate of Rivenhall.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 3s. 6d.

The Sea. Sketches of a Voyage to Hudson's Bay; and other Poems. By "The Scald."

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 7s. 6d.

Mess-Table Stories, Anecdotes, and Pasquinades, to Promote Mirth and Good Digestion. By Hoin Sirmoon.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

In 3 vols., post 8vo, price 31s. 6d. (In the press.)

Annette Doyme: A Story from Life.

By E. D. Fenton.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 3s. 6d.

Reflections on the Mysterious Fate of Sir

John Franklin. By James Parsons.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, 1 vol., price 6s.

Voyages to China, India, and America.

By W. S. S. Bradshaw.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, 1 vol., price 4s. (Ready.)

Italy's Hope: A Tale of Florence.

By John Ashford, Author of "The Lady and the Hound."

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 2s.

The Lady and the Hound. By John Ashford.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 7s. 6d., Illustrated. (Just ready.)

Poems. By "Sir Oscar Oliphant."

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Price 1s.

A Day on the Downs, by the Vale of White Horse.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Price 3d. each, or 20s. per 100. (Third Edition.)

An Elementary Religious Catechism ; being a Compendium of the chief Truths and Events revealed in the Holy Scriptures, as expounded and commemorated by the Church of England. By the Rev. Henry Kemp, M.A., Head Master of Cleobury-Mortimer Endowed Schools.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, 1 vol., price 8s. (Ready.)

Dearforgil, Princess of Brefney : A Historical Romance. By the Author of "The Last Earl of Desmond."

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 3s.

Anecdotes of the Bench and Bar.

By W. H. Grimmer.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, pp. 332, price 1s. 6d.

The History of England in Rhyme, from the Conquest to the Restoration.

"A delightful book for children and young people."

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Demy 8vo, price 12s. 6d. .

Switzerland in 1854-5 : A Book of Travel, Men, and Things. By the Rev. W. G. Heathman, B.A., Rector of St. Lawrence, Exeter, late British Chaplain at Interlaken.

London : J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 8s.

Julia; or, The Neapolitan Marriage.

By Margaret Tulloh.

"This work should be read by all who wish to possess a thorough knowledge of Neapolitan Life."

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Price 3s. Second Edition.

The Young Lady's First French Book, with a Vocabulary of the French and English, and the English and French, of all the words used in the Book. By R. Aliva.

"This work is decidedly the best we have yet seen of the kind, and we observe that our opinion is backed by our numerous contemporaries."—*Courier*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 1s. 6d.

Sir Hieram's Daughter and other Poems.

By R. Villiers Sankey, Author of "Poetical Romances and Ballads."

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Just published, in 1 vol., double post, price 7s. 6d. At all the libraries.

Liverpool Ho! A Matter-of-fact Story.

By Powys Oswyn, Author of "Ernest Milman: A Tale of Manchester Life," "Ralph Deane," &c. &c.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Demy 8vo, price 3s.

Duty to Parents: Honour thy Father and thy Mother. By a Clergyman of the Church of England.

"A useful companion to persons newly confirmed."—*Guardian*.

"Excellent in its purpose and contents."—*Spectator*.

"This excellent little volume may assist the parents above alluded to. It is a well planned, well-executed book."—*Leader*.

"This little book, placing the duty on its true Scriptural basis, would be a useful present to most young gentlemen, and even to some young ladies too."—*Churchman's Magazine*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 2s. 6d.

First Steps in British History, for the use of Schools and Private Families. By the late Tutor to the Earl of Glamorgan.

"The 'young nobleman' is the Earl of Glamorgan, and whoever his tutor is, we feel, on the perusal of these pages, that he is a man worthy to be trusted. The leading facts of British history are thrown into the form of a narrative, so simple that a child of six years may understand it. Taking this excellent nursery-book from beginning to end, we should say that the main facts are truthfully stated, and the great religious and constitutional principles guarded with a vigilance that would have done credit to the authors of many more pretentious books."—*Christian Times*.

"A concise and well-written summary of the history of England, from the invasion of Julius Cæsar to our own times. The language is simple, and, as the title premises, adapted to the comprehension of very young children; and the author, not satisfying himself with the bare recital of historical events, seizes every opportunity of inculcating good principles by pointing out those actions worthy of admiration and imitation, and those which should, contrariwise, be shunned."—*Britannia*.

"*First Steps in British History* is that rarest but most valuable of all educational works—a really simple and intelligible composition, adapted to the capacities of children. It is the best English History for schools we have yet seen."—*Critic*.

"*First Steps in British History*, being letters to a young nobleman by his tutor, is a summary of the leading events of the history of England, written in a plain, familiar style."—*Literary Gazette*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

1 vol. demy 8vo, price 10s. 6d.

Travels through the United States, Canada, and the West Indies. By John Shaw, M.D., F.G.S., F.L.S., Author of "A Tramp to the Diggings," &c.

"This is a most valuable work at the present time," &c. "This book is remarkable."—*Press*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 5s.

Christian Politics.

By the Rev. Henry Christmas, M.A., Author of "The Cradle of the Twin Giants," "Echoes of the Universe," "Shores and Islands of the Mediterranean," &c.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 2s.

Family Interests: A Story taken from Life.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 1s. 6d.

Arnold: A Dramatic History.

By Cradock Newton.

"There is exquisite beauty in 'Arnold.'"—*Glasgow Commonwealth*.

"'Arnold' is a book of real poetry. It is full of beauty, and will be felt to be so by all who have a lover's passion for the great and small things both of nature and of thought, and whose delight is to see them dressed in poetic fancies again and again."—*Inquirer*.

"In toiling across a wide desert of arid verse, we are too delighted to meet with the sound of a spring or the fragrance of a flower not to give it a welcome. Of the kind have we found in 'Arnold.' There are evident touches of poetry in it. The stream of the verse has a gleam of gold. The author is apparently very young, but has undoubtedly shown that he possesses the poetic temperament. An unusually pure tone and purpose in the book augur well for the future of the writer. The various lyrics show a sense of music in verse. The patrons of our minstrels will do well not to pass this little pamphlet by."—*Athenæum*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Price 1s. 6d.

Thoughts on the Revision of the Prayer-Book, and of the Terms of Clerical Conformity. By the Rev. J. R. Pretyman, M.A., late Vicar of Aylesbury, Bucks.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Demy 8vo, price 7s. 6d., illustrated. Second Edition.

Lays of Love and Heroism, Legends, Lyrics, and other Poems. By Eleanor Darby, Author of "The Sweet South."

"The Authoress is already well and favourably known to the British public by her previous publication, under the title of 'The Sweet South.' The appearance of the present volume will but call forth a repetition of those high encomiums which were so plentifully bestowed upon her former effort. The 'Lily o' Dundee' is of itself sufficient to show the distinguished abilities of the authoress, displaying, as it does, in a very high degree, her power, pathos, and poetic skill. The volume, as a whole, cannot fail to contribute very materially to the popularity of the accomplished authoress; and it deserves a very extensive circulation."—*Morning Advertiser*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Fcap. 8vo, price 2s. 6d.

On the Search for a Dinner. By W. R. Hare.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Post 8vo, price 4s., Illustrated.

The Sweet South; or, a Month at Algiers.

By Eleanor Darby.

For the excellent Reviews of this Work see *Athenæum*, *Observer*, *Literary Gazette*, *Critic*, *Courier*, &c.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

DR. E. LEE ON NICE AND MALAGA.

Demy 12mo, price 2s. 6d.

Nice and its Climate. With Notices of the Coast from Genoa to Marseilles, and Observations on the Influence of Climate on Pulmonary Consumption.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Price 1s. 6d.

The Nurse and the Nursery; being a Digest of Important Information with regard to the Early Training and Management of Children; together with Directions for the Treatment of Accidents apt to occur in the Nursery, and which every Nurse, Nursery Governess, and Mother ought to know.

"The instructions which he conveys are expressed in plain and intelligible terms, and no nurse or mother ought to be without them."—*Morning Post*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

WORKS BY THE REV. WILLIAM DUFF SCHOMBERG, B.A.,
Vicar of Polesworth.

Price 3d. (Just Published.)

The Pretensions of the Church of Rome to be considered Older than the Church of England, examined.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Price 1s.

Protestant Catholicism; or, the Characteristics of Catholicism as inherited, and maintained, under Protest, by the Church of England.

"The reader will find that he has at his fingers' ends a mass of information and argument."—*Church and State Gazette*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

In demy 12mo, price 2s. 6d., cloth. Second edition, with copious additions.

Elements of the British Constitution, containing a comprehensive View of the Monarchy and Government of England.

"It is precisely what it professes to be, an exposition of the 'Elements of the British Constitution;' and as such it is deserving of a place in every Englishman's library, and should be early placed in the hands of every English schoolboy. It is comprehensive without being diffuse; clear in its statement of principles without cumbering the mind with details."—*Liverpool Courier*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

Price 6d.

Political Protestantism, designed for the First Forms at Schools and for Young Men leaving their Homes for the engagements of Public life.

. The Profits of this Work are devoted to the Society of Church Missions in Ireland.

"The work consists of 78 pages of well-selected matter, drawn from valuable historical resources, and puts the question of Church and State, and the aggressions of Popery, in its proper light."—*Shropshire Conservative Journal*.

London: J. F. Hope, 16, Great Marlborough-street.

IMPORTANT TO AUTHORS.

NEW PUBLISHING ARRANGEMENTS.

J. F. HOPE,

16, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET,

By his New Publishing Arrangements, CHARGES NO COMMISSION for Publishing Books Printed by him until the Author has been repaid his original outlay. And, as all Works intrusted to his care are Printed in the very best style, and at prices far below the usual charges, AUTHORS ABOUT TO PUBLISH will find it much to their advantage to apply to him.

Specimens, Estimates, and all particulars forwarded gratuitously, by return of post.

ENGRAVING on STEEL, WOOD, &c.

ALSO LITHOGRAPHING,

BY FIRST-RATE ARTISTS AND AT VERY REASONABLE CHARGES.



DEC 11 1966

FILE BINDING